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SQUIRE SILCHESTER'S WHIM.



SQUIRE SILCHESTER'S WHIM.

BY

MORTIMER COLLINS.



VOL. I.

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TO
FREDERICK LOCKER,
POET,
AND FRIEND OF POETS.





1971



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SQUIRE SILCHESTER'S WHIM.

CHAPTER I.

THE SQUIRE AND HIS WIFE.

“Behold a character antique,
Who loved his wife, and liked his Greek.”

SQUIRE SILCHESTER. John Silchester of Silchester, in Devon, the best Greek scholar and master of hounds that the county had known for a century or more. A tall broad man of five-and-thirty, when we first see him, with a clear keen eye and firm arched mouth, with wrists and legs and shoulders such as you seldom see out of Devon. Heritor of a princely estate, with a noble old Tudor mansion

thereon, set in such fashion that across lawn, lake, and deer park, and woodland you saw a splash of silver sea.

Up and down his book-room walked John Silchester. He was fidgety. Why? Because Joan Silchester, his wife of a year, born Joan Audley of Audley, was about to give him a son or a daughter. Which?

To Squire Silchester this was a question of some moment, seeing that the Silchester estates (a little kingdom in themselves) were entailed on heirs male, and that the next heir was a tremendous scamp. So, although like all poetic fathers he fancied he should like a daughter—a feminine reflex of himself, a baby image of his wife—his material desires were in favour of the coming of a man-child. If a man heartily loves his wife, he imagines that his daughter will reproduce that wife in her babyhood, and the wife who loves her husband thinks the same as to her son. The anticipation is often a great blunder; but that does

not matter. We must take this world as it is—as indeed we help to make it; for Humanity is a junior partner in the firm of Creation. If men are disappointed, it is usually their own fault. Either their expectations are impossible, or they do not go the right way to obtain their fulfilment.

Squire Silchester paced up and down, well aware that he would be much in the way if he approached too near the sacred chamber, and meditated on the possible future of the Silchester race. He is a man of curious ideas. This indeed is a family inheritance, his ancestors having always had a quaint cantankerous temper. There is an intellectual and social Toryism, likely to exist if even political Toryism is washed away by the fast-rising flood of new opinions, all different and all absurd. There is a belief which, though possibly ill-founded, is altogether indestructible in the human race—that it is well to be not only a man, but also a gentleman. This creed of the minority held

Squire Silchester, and it smote him strongly now that he expected a young squire to educate For he saw, only too clearly, what harm was being done by the many young gentlemen of the age who were trying to correct the errors of all past ages. The Squire did not want a boy who would begin in his teens to reform the world. The Silchesters had from time immemorial been lords of their own village, and lovers of their own folk. As usually occurs in a county family of long descent, there had been Tories among them and Whigs also; and in the picture gallery were portraits of twin brothers, of whom one had fought by the side of Falkland, and the other by that of Hampden. But whatsoever the political opinions of the Silchesters, they were all loyal to their home and their village—all glad to return from the arena of vain strife to their ancestral corner of Devon.

Our Squire's life had been singularly uneventful. He had stayed at home and hunted the country for the last twelve years, since his

father's death—following in this regard his father's example. The old gentleman was close on eighty when he died, and his only child was only twenty-three. This happened in curious fashion. John Silchester the elder had in his hot youth met with a Miss Barbara Restormel, a Cornish lady of birth and beauty, but twice his age—for he was about eighteen. He fell madly in love with her—

“This is the way that boys begin”—

and she very wisely declined to have anything to say to him. He, in a furious rage, swore he would slay the man who dared to marry her : she rendered this threat ineffective by choosing, to the amazement of two counties, a learned pious short-sighted curate, as much older than herself as she was older than the Squire. The Rev. David Dallas was a first-class mathematician, and a theologian so erudite that his vicar often remonstrated with him on the difficult character of his explanations of Scrip-

ture; but he was the last man you would expect to win a splendid woman in her prime —though these last men often do it. He was tall and thin and sallow; he stooped; he coughed; he was absurdly absent; he could not remember a name, or a face, or the day of the month, or the day of the week. But Barbara Restormel, a superb and vigorous woman, saw in this man something which she saw not in the young peers and squires who threw themselves at her pretty (if rather ample) feet; and she married him three years after she had refused Squire Silchester of Silchester; and the Squire, whose bark was far worse than his bite, took the generous revenge of presenting him to the family living of Silchester— eight hundred a year, and a glebe of about five hundred acres.

Here the rector lived comfortably and pleasantly, dining full oft with the man who had menaced him with death, drinking his port and using his library. Here the rectoress

was also prosperous and happy, the very soul of the village, the unfailing guide and friend of all who needed guidance and friendship. She had not married her parson for nothing. His awkward form concealed a noble nature, strangely capable of influencing others with which it came in contact. He influenced Squire Silchester, a man reported invincibly obstinate. He tamed the unkempt rebellious school-children, with whom the schoolmaster had done no good, though he decimated the Squire's birch plantations. He kept in genial awe the frequenters of wild solitary taverns, where poaching and smuggling were the most trivial amusements ever designed. He was a magnetic man. Such men are of immense use, when they go aright. The Rev. David Dallas seldom went very far wrong.

About two years after marriage, Mrs. Dallas had a daughter, who was also named Barbara. The Squire was intensely fond of this infant iota. Tacitly he had vowed to himself that

never would he marry; but he felt a half-paternal love for this child of a dream-wife, and he lavished on her luxuries which made the rector and Mrs. Dallas remonstrate. Remonstrance was vain. For little Barbara nothing was too good. She had a pony at five—a sturdy little Exmoor, with a loin like the seat of an arm-chair. It clearly gave the Squire such pleasure to be kind to her, that her father and mother gave up their objections, and he was allowed to do much as he liked.

Barbara Dallas grew into a lovely girl. Like her mother in form, though slenderer, she was converse in character. Barbara the elder was daring—daring enough to marry a poor and elderly curate because she loved him. Barbara the younger was shy, timid, afraid indeed of all men except her father and the Squire. The Squire, to say truth, was her playmate, though old enough to be her father; he taught her to ride to hounds; he got her a light gun with which to shoot pheasants; he

introduced her to old-fangled literature in his quaint old library ; he taught and teased and petted her as if she had been a favourite daughter.

The rector had been about twenty years married, when a severe disease of the chest, doubtless latent before, so weakened him that he was ordered to go abroad. He and his wife and daughter started for Madeira. The Squire would gladly have gone too, but the lord of a great estate and the master of hounds is not always his own lord and master. He would hardly have allowed these claims to operate, had he known that he should never again see the rector or his wife, and that he should not meet Barbara for almost ten years.

Yet this was the result. An elder brother of Mrs. Dallas's, the head of the Restormel family, had been living in various parts of the Continent for half a century. Accident brought them together. He was kind ; he wanted amusement ; he thought his niece a lovely

child, approaching the end of her teens ; he made them deviate from their appointed tack, and took them to many other places. The rector by this time was growing too weak to have a voice in the matter ; his wife was easily persuaded by her brother that his plans were the best—that movement and distraction were more likely to do the rector good than monotonous residence in a single island ; and our timid Barbara, if she had thought there was any mistake, would scarce have dared say so. Hence the rector went from city to city, the choicest in Europe, luxuriously travelling, faring luxuriously ; and he quite enjoyed the time ; and in his eighth decade it was a delight to him to see cities and waters known to him in dreams—to compare with his classic vision the neoteric reality of Rome and Athens.

People said it shortened his life.

“ It lengthened his life,” said Polwhele Restormel. “ He lived more in those last few years than he had ever lived before.”

A series of accidents, which would be tedious in description, prevented Barbara Dallas from again meeting Squire Silchester for nearly ten years. By this time she was an orphan. Her mother had died at Nice. Her uncle, Polwhele Restormel, had died a few months later in the crescent-city of Bath, leaving her all his personal property. She had communicated with some of her Cornish friends, and had received hearty west-country invitations. She would go first to Truro, where cousins innumerable desired to welcome and console her.

The Quicksilver mail had come up to the front entrance of the York House. The impatient leaders shook their hoofs in curious contrast with the heavy turtles that lay a few yards beneath in the open area, ready to be made into soup. Down the wide staircase of the famous old hotel, waiters with waxlights in advance, and a gentlemanly groom of the chambers in respectful attendance at her side, came lovely Barbara Dallas—a fine woman,

though blackened by the deepest funereal crape.

At the foot of the staircase, nervous in her solitariness, she tripped. The groom of the chambers was not quick enough. A stalwart man who was crossing the vestibule from the coffee-room promptly caught her, saying cheerily,

“Not hurt, I hope?”

There was something so familiar in his voice that she looked straight at him without her customary fear.

“Why, Barbara!” exclaimed Squire Silchester, amazing the demure groom of the chambers by instantly kissing her. “Where have you been these fifty years?”

It was in this way that Squire Silchester met again the daughter of his lost love—the little girl whom he had petted as a daughter. The result of the meeting was that he married her; and the result of the marriage was our friend John Silchester, whom I have left all this time in doubt whether the new-comer into

the race of Silchester would be a son or a daughter.

It was a daughter. The sequent disappointment is expressible only by asterisks.

* * * *

However, within a year a son arrived, and John Silchester was happy. He had christened his little daughter Silvia. He christened his son, rather an obstreperous brat, since he gave the parson a black eye as he held him over the font, Silvester. He was an odd being, as I shall proceed to show.

But first a word concerning the lady of the manor, by no means an inconsiderable personage. As Miss Audley, heiress of Audley, she had been the belle of the county. John Silchester, a resolute young gentleman, had seen her in a box at the theatre in "Ex'ter town," and had at once made up his mind. He was not at all devoid of promptitude. He found her the very next day in Audley Park

taking her morning walk, introduced himself, and asked her to marry him.

She consented !

Why ?

Why should a Devonshire girl like this take a man at his word ?

The answer is easy. She saw he was a MAN. She saw he was loving and brave and guileless and good. She saw in him what he saw in her. They married—and never had a moment's regret. They understood each other from the very first. It was a marriage of completion. The lady had just the qualities which the Squire had not. She kept house notably. Those were times when down in the country service was an inheritance ; the young house-maid was mayhap the housekeeper's niece, the young stable-boy the coachman's nephew ; and those elder servants felt themselves responsible for their relations, and kept them in order by sharp discipline. Now the Audleys of Audley were old-fashioned and old-fangled

folk. Their domestic affairs were well managed. They made their own butter and cheese and cream and cider, brewed their own ale, and kept it till it was strong and clear; distilled their own essences of rose, rosemary, lavender. Wherefore Joan Audley came to Silchester with full knowledge of all that a gentlewoman ought to know, and with certainty that she would teach her servants things to them unknown.

By no means let it be supposed that she was merely a good housewife. True, she knew not a word of French, and was incapable of playing the “Battle of Prague” on the piano. But in the school kept by Madam Tucker in the Cathedral Close,—an ancient lady who (with aid of younger folk) had brought up three Devon generations, and who was in the habit of keeping recalcitrant girls in order by a tap with her old ivory fan upon their shoulder,—Joan Audley had learnt English well. She did not write themes; she did read Shakespeare

and Swift. She worked a sampler; she learnt her catechism; she was taught logic and geometry. Madam Tucker was of that old-fashioned style of schoolmistress which curiously united simplicity with subtlety. She would make a girl of sixteen wear a pinafore, and stand her in a corner if she gave herself airs and graces, yet would carry her into Shakespeare's magic realm, and show her the clue to Milton's music, and teach her how to detect the error of a syllogism, and make her find out for herself the curious law which holds as to the intersecting diagonals of a regular pentagon. She made her pupils do two things —*obey* and *think*. "Learn those two words thoroughly," she would say, "and you will be good women. You must obey me. You must think for yourselves. You will be wives and mothers by-and-by; then you will have to obey your husbands, and at the same time to make your children and servants obey you. You will be placed in various conditions which

neither you nor I can foresee; then you will find the value of being able to think for yourselves."

Thus the old lady was wont to lecture over the breakfast table now and then.

I suppose half the wives of the Devonshire squires for about three generations learnt to obey and think from Madam Tucker in her famous school in the Close of Walter Branscombe's Cathedral. They all turned out well, those girls of hers. She would have none but ladies. She treated them with the utmost kindness, yet punished them when requisite with the utmost severity. She held herself, and with justice, the equal of the most patrician of her pupils' mothers.

Such was Mrs. Silchester's schoolmistress.

This sort of teaching has gone very much out of fashion, and I can only hope that the modern school boards may introduce something more satisfactory and scientific. Still there are a good many people who have felt

grateful for such an education as Madam Tucker's, and have wished they could find something similar for their own children, even in these days of ladies' colleges and aristocratic seminaries. That old Exeter dame taught nothing she did not know, and made her pupils learn.

When Silvia and Silvester Silchester were out of the nurse's hands, their mother thought it time they should learn their alphabet. She opened the subject to the Squire.

“Alphabet!” he exclaimed. “My dear Joan, they shall learn nothing of the kind. It would be absurd to teach children what is really a nonentity. How many alphabets are there? how many letters in each? how many sounds without a letter to represent them?”

Mrs. Silchester, though one of Madam Tucker's prize pupils, was taken thoroughly aback by this eloquent outburst of her husband. He, standing with his back to the great wood

fire in the hall, waxed more voluble as he waxed warmer.

“Alphabets, my darling Joan, are the ruin of realms and religions. I object to printing,” —a strong statement from the owner of the choicest library in Devon—“but printing was inevitable when that scoundrel Cadmus invented an alphabet.”

Mrs. Silchester was not unused to the Squire’s volubility. She had a vague idea that Madam Tucker had introduced her to Cadmus, but not, she thought, as a scoundrel. However, she was far too wise a woman to interrupt her husband in the full flush of his oratory. On he went, like a rivulet after rain.

“Aristophanes taught the Athenians that true gentlemen ought not to be able to read or write. Imagination and memory are what men want. Learn your Homer and your Solon. Get poetry and law into your brain; the one will teach you the pleasure and peril of life, the other its method and management.”

"But really, John," says Mrs. Silchester, "would you like our son and daughter not to know reading and writing?"

"Yes," he replied, with an emphasis that deserves small capitals. "My dear girl, you talk of teaching them their alphabet. Do *you* know your alphabet?"

"I ought to," she answered.

"What alphabet do you know?"

"Why, the English, you goose," said Joan, pulling his whiskers. They had left the hall, and were sitting side by side on one of those dear old parlour window-seats that held out in Devon longer than in any other county. Is there a parlour all through England now? Or have the [with]drawing-rooms exterminated them?

Parlour! How I like the word! A room for chat, talk, gossip. A room without stiffness. A room for afternoon. It had no antimacassars; and the big mastiff lounged in to see who called; and there might be a volume of Swift

or Fielding on the window-seat. Where are they gone, those rooms? Where are the pretty demure damsels gone—our aunts or our aunts' aunts—who sat and flirted in them?

“Well, you know,” quoth John Silchester, gravely, “English has no alphabet. English has a rude *a b c*, I admit, just as Etruscan had a rude *l m n*, whence the word *element*. But here am I with a girl and a boy to educate—and I am told that the proper way to begin is to teach them a heteroëpic abracadabra.”

“I wish you could manage without such long words, dear,” said Joan.

“I am very sorry, my darling, but indignation drives me to use strong language.”

“My dear Jack,” says Mrs. Silchester, “it isn’t your strong language I don’t like, it’s your long language.”

The Squire laughed.

“Never mind, my pet,” he said. “I’ll try to behave better. You want these two little rascals to learn the alphabet because you and

I learnt it, and it has not done us much injury. But aren't most people better without it? You teach a scoundrel to sign his name, and he forges a cheque. You teach a fool the art of writing, and he produces an epic poem, or a new way of squaring the circle. No: I have made up my mind about the education of my son and daughter. Two things will I never teach them: two things they must learn of their own free will when capable of teaching themselves: one is the alphabet, and the other the multiplication table."

"Well," said Joan, "I suppose I must submit, as I vowed to *obey*, and I don't much admire the multiplication table, because I always thought that seven times nine was ninety-one; but I *should* like to know why you are angry about the alphabet."

"Alphabet! My dear child, we haven't got an alphabet. Our vowels and consonants are a set of maniacs fit for Colney Hatch. Look at other nations. We have twenty-six charac-

ters, several of which are double letters, several of which have several sounds. In Syriac there are more than two hundred characters. In Sanscrit there are more than three hundred. We don't want so many, but we want more—and less—than we have. *A* has half a dozen sounds. *X* is *ks*. *I* is *ae*, the former vowel being broad and soft, as in the word *half*."

"Well," said Joan Silchester, "that reminds me that I am your better-half. If that's the case, I shall be mistress now, and shut you up about alphabets, which is very dull talk, and make you come out into the garden."

And into the garden they went. It was very nice. The Squire, with all his scholastic caprices, could enjoy his sweet-lipped fair-bosomed wife, with her freaks and fancies and flowers.

CHAPTER II.

WHITE PAPER.

“Tous les grands hommes ont leurs antipathies : Jacques II. ne pouvait supporter l'éclat d'une épée, Roger Bacon tombait en faillance à la vue d'une pomme ; moi, le papier blanc m'inspire une mélancolie profonde.”

WITH this *grand homme Français* I would agree. A sheet of white paper, even though I have only to place on it a note to a good friend or a generous publisher, makes me melancholy at first sight. O that writing had never been invented ! Imagine my *mélancolie profonde* when the sheet of unstained paper before me is the first of about a thousand that I shall have to spoil in presenting you, dear reader, with a three volume novel.

Am I digressing ? Very likely, in the eyes

of the critics. Have I a right to digress? Those purblind critics answer, No. Now your ordinary critic always refers to high literary authorities—though it generally turns out he has never read them. I make three statements here, which I mean to prove by authority and logic :

- I. I have a right to digress.
- II. Critics have no right to interfere.
- III. I am not digressing.

There was once published in this city of London a work of enormous genius, dedicated “To His Royal Highness Prince Posternity.” H.R.H. is here, but I regret to say that he prefers a great deal of effeminate and feminine trash to the work of England’s first prose-writer. The seventh section of that famous story *A Tale of a Tub* is entitled *A Digression in Praise of Diggessions*, and thus doth Swift end it: “The necessity of this digression will easily excuse the length ; and I have chosen for it as proper a place as I could readily find. If the

judicious reader can assign a better, I do here empower him to remove it into any other corner he pleases."

I give like power to any judicious reader of this chapter—should I be lucky enough to hook so big a fish,—at the same time warning him (or her) that to skip this chapter will be a terrible mistake. It contains the clue to the whole story.

Having proved on the highest authority that an author has right to digress, I proceed to show that the interference of a critic is sheer trespass. It may not be generally known to the ingenious gentlemen who tell us every week what to read and what not to read that there was once a romance written by a descendant of the Counts of Hapsburg, concerning which the famous historian Gibbon (him you know, of course,) declares that it "will outlive the palace of the Escorial, and the imperial eagle of Austria." If the English language last—and it will be the fault of fools if it last

not—Gibbon is right. Well, the great writer to whom he refers will prove my case. Thus he addresses his reader: “We warn thee not too hastily to condemn any of the incidents of this our history, as impertinent and foreign to our main design, because thou dost not immediately conceive in what manner such incident may conduce to that design. This work may indeed be considered as a great creation of our own; and for a little reptile of a critic to presume to find fault with any of its parts, without knowing the manner in which the whole is connected, and before he comes to the final catastrophe, is a most presumptuous absurdity.”

So critics are designated by the writer whom Scott and Thackeray declared the greatest English novelist, *little reptiles!* Very hard on the critics!

Farther on, the great story-teller digresses again to laugh at critics—many of whom, even in his days, were briefless barristers. I will quote only a few of his words, but they are to the

point: for he described common English folk, and made no pretence to be elegantly pathetic and unnaturally sentimental. He objects to critics who, "without assigning any particular faults, condemn the whole in general defamatory terms, such as *vile*, *dull*, *damned stuff*, &c., and particularly by the use of the mono-syllable *low*."

Low! There you have it. Thus, whereas, according to the title of the best farce ever writ by a schoolmaster, there is high life below stairs, is there not also low life above stairs?—a farce that now and then verges on tragedy.

Having Swift and Fielding as authorities on the first two counts of my indictment, I need take slight trouble on the third; yet it is the most momentous of the three. I am not digressing. I keep close to my thesis. The keynote of my story is—*Never put pen to paper*. The unwisdom hereof is shown when a man of genius writes a book. If there were no writing, no printing, men would listen for a

poet's lightest words, would use their memories to retain them, would keep them in their brains instead of on their shelves.

Better also for the poet. It is so much easier to write bad rhyme and rhythm than to utter bad rhyme and rhythm. It is so much easier to say a thing twice over in your own study than before an audience who drink in your rhapsody. Besides, your audience helps you: if you have any brains (which, as a modern poet, one may doubt,) they will make you improvise and ejaculate.

I have passed from white paper to the agora. They are not materially unconnected. The *cacoëthes scribendi* is akin to the *legendi*. But were there less scribbling, I think there would be stricter speaking. Men get charged with leading articles; and there results what Coleridge used to call (in days when such aperients were weaker) an oral diarrhœa. If a man or woman either could not or would not read, he or she would be forced to think.

CHAPTER III.

OLYMPUS.

Η μὲν δρ ώ εἰποῦσ' ἀνέβη γλαυκῶπις Ἀθῆνη
Οδυμπτενδ', θθι φασὶ θεῶν ἔδος ασφαλὲς αἱ
ἔμμεναι· οὐτ' ἀνέμοισι τινάσσεται οὐτε ποτ' ὄμβρῳ
δεύεται οὐτε χῶν ἐπιπλυναται, ἀλλὰ μαλ' αἴθρῃ·
πέπταται ἀνέφελος, λευκὴ δ' επιδέδρομεν αἴγλη.
τῷ ἔνι τέρπονται μάκαρες θεοὶ θματα πάντα.

ΟΔΤΣΣΕΙΑΣ. Z.

IN John Silchester's judgment, when not
rebellious about the alphabet, the true
Olympus was a library. There you were be-
yond reach of all the miserable windy influ-
ences which surround the outer world. There
you could enjoy life without interference,
could "unsphere the spirit of Plato," could
call at a word from the mysterious past the

famous writers and orators who can never be forgotten.

“In my library,” he was wont to say, “I am ten paces from Homer, though there are thirty centuries of human life between us. I can recall Aristophanes on the instant, to give me all the witty chaff of Athens. Here is my favourite philosophic poet Lucretius; here also my favourite amorous poet Catullus; both ready to give me their ideas if only I am fortunate enough to understand them. Shakespeare will step from that shelf when I ask him, surrounding me with such strong humanity and strange romance as never came beneath wand of any other enchanter. Even the spirits of men still living are summoned at my will. I sit here as a magician beyond the reach of unpleasantness from without, and with infinite intellectual wealth inside.”

That he was inconsistent with himself is manifest, but the best men have their inconsistencies. He said this, or something like it,

to Dr. John Sterne. The Doctor was a very humorous fellow, and a very able physician. Humour and ability are frequent partners. Many a fool, of each sex, has been cured of imaginary illness by the Doctor's satire.

“Squire,” said the Doctor, who, though a man not quite thirty, had considerable influence over those who knew him, “it is strange that with this love of books and knowledge of their power, you talk of keeping them locked against your son and daughter. Here you have the finest collection of books and manuscripts in Devon,—some of the latter unique and inedited. Now I ask you, Squire, what business have you to possess these treasures, and forbid your children to enjoy them?”

“I could plead paternal right, Doctor, according to the ancient law of the wisest nations,” quoth Squire Silchester, lying comfortably back in his chair. He liked an argument; he particularly liked an argument with Dr. Sterne. “But I will not return to first

principles; I will argue the question with you on utilitarian grounds. What atom or iota of good have writing and printing done to the human race?"

"I rather think this library answers your question," said the Doctor, waving his hand to the long rows of nobly bound books carefully preserved behind glass. Russia and vellum and morocco had not been spared; there were finest editions of the most illustrious presses.

"When you are in Rome," said the Squire, "you must do as do the Romans. My fore-fathers, or, to speak more accurately, fore-ganglers, left me a fine library, and I have done my best to improve it. They also left me a good estate, and I have improved that, and should have done so even had I believed that property is robbery. Moreover, they left me as a legacy the arts of writing and reading—and I exercise them, and do my uttermost to exercise them wisely. If you find you have to

do a thing; do it well: this need not prevent your asking whether the thing ought to be done. If I were a soldier, I would fight my hardest, though I believe war to be the absolute maximum of wickedness and folly. So, I have a library, and power of reading the books therein, and I exercise my power as well as I can. Still I would rather not have learnt an alphabet or seen a book."

"I know your theory of old," said Sterne, "and have always held that there is something in it. Indeed, there is always an element of reason in the most impracticable of notions. There is sublimity in the idea of teaching all things through poetry—in passing human ideas from mouth to ears, while the untired eye is left to gather its virgin impressions from the beauty that surrounds it. I am throwing back to you what I have heard from you, because we agree in a certain measure. But you cannot roll back the wheels of time; you can no

“more abolish writing and printing than you can abolish money.”

“ You are quite right, my dear Doctor, and your illustration is apposite. I know it were vain to try to abolish money, but I think I can teach my girl and boy to understand that money is a mere representative of goods, and that a sovereign is no better than a pound’s worth of dung in a cart. In like manner, I have no desire to revolutionize the world and abolish writing and printing ; but my children shall not be taught to read or write. I will teach them by the living voice. I will put theology and science in verse for them, when necessary ; but I will in the first place make them learn from me the noblest poetry in English. Their eyes shall be taught, not to pore over type, though it were Baskerville’s clearest, but to see the robin singing on its branch, the wren hiding in foliage, the heron fishing its pool, and suddenly astounded when the hawk swings into poise above it, the water-

rat washing his wiry whiskers, the otter lying in the river like a stone for fear of dogs on the margin,—all the beauties and excitements of nature. Put a poor unfortunate youngster to his

“As in praesenti perfectum format in avi,”

words whose meaning is beyond him, and flog him on a lovely summer afternoon for not remembering the miserable mnemonics, and in what temper or with what power of enjoyment will he run out upon the cool grass beneath the sunset sky? ”

“I suspect, physiologically considered,” said the Doctor, “that it does boys good to be flogged.”

“I suspect, under all considerations, it does them more good not to be flogged. But that is not the question between us, Doctor. You attack me for reverting to ancient methods of learning, though you boast yourself to be a high Tory. Neither Homer nor any of the

heroes he celebrated could read or write: why should we?"

"Legal proceedings would be considerably embarrassed if—"

The Squire interrupted.

"Anything that will embarrass legal proceedings will give me infinite pleasure."

"Well, Squire," said the Doctor, holding up a glass of Madeira to catch a sunbeam which shot gaily through a stained window, "I throw up the argument. But are those two young folk never to learn what everybody else knows? They are about eleven and twelve now, are they not?"

"They are; and the world would call them uneducated: but are there any other two of the age in England who can give you *As You Like It* word for word? Are there any other two who, with a pointed stick upon the sea-sand, can prove that circles vary as the squares of their radii?"

“ Yet they have not begun to read ? ” said the Doctor.

“ Nor to write. This library is open to them, and they can begin on any book they choose. There are a good many here that I can’t read. In the chaos of alphabets which lies around them, the question is, which alphabet they will try first. There are materials here for their learning Chinese if they fancy it.”

By the way, all this time I have not described the Doctor ; and as the conversation was at that moment interrupted, now is just the time to do it. Dr. Sterne was a capital physician, a good scholar, a pleasant humorist, and had from time immemorial been engaged on a life of Arbuthnot, (yet unpublished,) whom he much resembled. He also resembled Hippocrates in his habit of uttering oracular maxims or aphorisms. Some of these have been preserved, and may possibly hereafter be published ; and if any of his wise sayings should by accident

creep into this narrative, be it fully understood that they are copyright.

Let us return to the interruption, which was slightly tragical. In came a rather flyaway sort of servant-girl, who had been sent out with the children, exclaiming :

“ O sir ! plase, sir ! Miss Silvy’s been and got drowned in the big fish-pond, and master Silvy’s been and got drowned in saving her ! O my ! I’m took so bad.”

Whereon she deliberately fainted, without drawing much notice. Squire and Doctor raced together to the big fish-pond—a mighty pool of immemorial white water-lilies, and of carp as old as the Conquest. The scene they saw on the old mossy margin was curious. A boy lying on the ground, faint and drenched ; a girl drenched, but with no sign of faintness, trying to recover him ; a mighty mastiff with broken chain standing by, and at intervals licking the boy’s face.

The Doctor, lighter and so swifter than the

Squire, picked up Master Silvester. “*All right!*” he shouted to the father, who was some yards behind. Indeed the boy had just begun to open his eyes, and a drop of some reviving spirit which the Doctor carried about him made him fit to walk home.

“You must both go to bed at once,” said Dr. Sterne, “and I’ll bring you some physic.”

The children went forward rapidly, under guidance of servants who had now arrived. The Squire and Doctor walked slowly up the lawn, followed by the great mastiff, who dragged a yard of chain. When they reached the corner opening to the courtyard, a groom said to Squire Silchester,

“Please, sir, what be us to do for Lion? He’s been and smashed his kennel all to bits.”

On turning into the stable-yard they saw that the heavy kennel had been dragged right across it, and shattered to fragments by the dog’s impetuosity. The men about the stables

wondered what was the matter with him, but the truth was that he had heard a child's weak cry down at the fish-pond, and nothing could hold him. So far as the accident could be rightly made out, it came to this: Silvia, getting into a cranky boat, awkwardly upset it; her brother, who was tying flies on the shore, rushed in after her, and got her into shallow water, but in so doing fell back into a deeper part; then Silvia screamed, and her scream brought Lion to the rescue, who took the boy out, and looked on lovingly while his sister strove to revive him.

“That dog shall never sleep in a kennel again,” said John Silchester.

Nor did he; thereafter he slept in the Squire's bedroom.

Mrs. Silchester and the Doctor between them soon got the children right again. A day in bed brought them round. When the mother and the physician had done their duty, they had a brief conversation.

"My poor boy was nearly gone they tell me, Dr. Sterne."

"Not so bad as that. Brandy soon revived him. Brandy is a thing that should always be carried in the pocket."

"Do you think so? It might tempt some people," said Mrs. Silchester slyly, for she knew the Doctor liked his aphorizing.

"Temptation is the mother of virtue," he replied. "All persons who cannot resist temptation should be put beyond its reach. But Silvester showed himself a brave boy, and Lion a brave dog, and it is just as well that children should learn to trust to themselves and learn to meet danger bravely. Half the evils of life result from fear."

"'Tis conscience makes cowards of us all," quoted Mrs. Silchester.

"Shakespeare is wrong there, or at least the character he makes speak. Conscience makes men good and brave, for conscience is the voice of God in the hearts of men. A man

must be a coward born to fear his own conscience.”

“I must think over that, Doctor, and I must go now and see that the children are recovering.”

The Doctor went to the library. He found the Squire on Olympus, reading Lucretius, Tonson’s famous illustrated quarto of 1712.

CHAPTER IV.

MUSICAL WILLIE.

“The dinner was gude, and sae were the wines :
Hark, hark, says Willie ;
Come listen each one who to music inclines,
And I'll sing a short song o' some four hundred lines ;
Wi' my dactyl and spondee,
My Latin and Greek——
List ! says musical Willie.”

Song of the Morayshire Society.

SCUIRE SILCHESTER liked to know everybody in the Silchester village and vicinage, whether dependent on him or otherwise. Few strangers came thither ; but at the little fishing hamlet of Mount St. Nicholas there were visitors now and then, who got into stuffy little cottages how they could. There

was a legend in the place that a lady from London took the ground-floor, two rooms, of old Bill Rendell's cottage—unaware that there was indeed no floor at all, but native mud, which Bill had deftly carpeted. Under the bed in the sleeping-room was a nice little pool, which Bill's pet Muscovy ducks were used to haunt, when he and his wife were sleeping there. He forgot to turn them out when his lodger came, and at midnight she was awakened by strange sounds under the bed, and rushed out into the street in airy attire, screaming that she had heard ghostly sounds. The spectral utterances were of course *Quack! quack!*

Mount St. Nicholas is so called because high above the fishing village, on a green hill that can be seen miles away, there stands an old church with a high square tower, dedicated to St. Nicholas. The church and hamlet are just beyond the limits of Silchester manor, and belong to an old family with great estates far

away in Northumberland, who seldom visit this despised property. Yet the founder of the house lies in St. Nicholas Church, an illegible bronze above him; and the old gray dwelling which his descendants used to inhabit, built of granite, with all sorts of ancient anomalies, stands midway down the slope, about as far below the church as above the top of the steep village street. That street is a pitched path six feet wide, with a rivulet running down it when the springs rise on St. Nicholas Mount; and descends to the sea so steeply that to walk down the roof of a house were not much safer. Timid people can cling to the pales of the cottage gardens, which are however rather rickety.

The Manor House at Mount St. Nicholas, as it was magniloquently called, was generally to let. Once an enterprising speculator had furnished it second-hand, and tried to attract visitors by advertising in the *Times* the beauty and salubrity of the situation, and the perfect

accommodation ; but he did not take much by it. It stood empty for a long time ; then, about five years after the Squire's marriage, it was taken by a Scottish gentleman, who bore the name of William Nairn, and who settled down permanently, with no companions save his man-servant, Donald, and a colley dog of remarkable sagacity. Mr. Nairn was a ruddy broad-shouldered man of five feet eight, with a merry twinkle in his eye, and a pleasant half-cynical half-Epicurean expression of mouth. His servant Donald was a gaunt Highlander of six feet four, who wore the kilt. A little Devonshire maid who came to the Manor House with cream on the day after the arrival, ran away when Donald opened the door, dropping her pitcher. She came crying to her mother, declaring that she had seen a she-giant, that wanted to eat her up.

The relations between the fishing folk and their new neighbours soon became friendly. Mr. Nairn was a middle-aged bachelor, kind-

hearted and open-handed ; he liked to play the flute and the fiddle ; he liked to make a homely song, music and all, and sing it among uncritical friends over a bowl of whisky punch ; he liked to turn into English doggrel a morsel of Moschus or an ode of Horace. What brought him to Mount St. Nicholas puzzled the simple fishing folk ; puzzled even more Squire Silchester and Dr. Sterne, when they came to know him, which was not long.

As to Donald, his tall henchman, he loved his master thoroughly, but despised him for being a Lowlander, and for playing the flute and fiddle. He, Donald, played the bagpipes ; had played that dread wind instrument behind the chair of a great chief of the Campbells, when a hundred gentlemen dined from gold plate by the blaze of pine-torches. He was wont to walk up and down the sands on a moonlight night, and play tune upon tune for hours together—enough to frighten all the fish of the sea : still—

“The herring loves the merry moonlight,
The mackerel loves the wind,
But the oyster loves the dredger’s song,
For he comes of a gentle kind.”

If Donald’s bagpipes had repeated the miracle of Arion, and brought the fish to the shore to listen, they would surely have been frightened back into deep water by his giant stride, and the mighty movement of his arm, and the flying kilt which

“Streamed like a meteor on the troubled air.”

When the Squire heard of a stranger at the Manor House, he and the Doctor walked over. They were shown by Donald into a quaint room, littered with unarranged books, for which the Highlander had begun to fix shelves. Mr. Nairn rose from a writing-table, niched into a window, which window looked over leagues of sea. Dr. Sterne’s quick eye discovered that a large folio open on the table was in the Greek tongue, and much resembled Sophocles. It was clear at a glance that the Scotchman,

whatever his history, and however eccentric he might be, was a gentleman.

An invitation to dinner was given and accepted. It was not long before the Squire and the Doctor and the new-comer were friends—Mr. Nairn won Mrs. Silchester's heart by his kindness to her girl and boy, with whom he delighted to romp. One day, early in their acquaintance, little Silvester said,

“I won't call you Mister Nairn any longer. It's ugly. If you haven't got another prettier name, I shall make a name for you.”

“They called me Willie when I was a boy,” he said.

“Then you shall be Willie now that I'm a boy. Silvia, you're to call him Willie. I shall make everybody call you Willie. You are much more like Willie than like Mister Nairn.”

This young tyrant so dominated the household, that very soon those who did not address Nairn as Willie, always called him by that name when speaking of him ; and one day Mrs.

Silchester called him so in his presence, and blushed, and apologized for having caught from her boy the contagion of rudeness.

“It is the highest compliment you can pay me, madam,” he said.

There was some lapse of time before the epithet *musical* was prefixed to his name. Pre-cocious young Silvester said to him one day,

“I shall come over and rummage your old castle. I believe you’re an ogre, and keep an enchanted princess there, turned into a cat. I’m a magician, you know. I’ll turn you into a mouse for her to eat, and then I’ll disenchant her—and marry her if she suits me. There are not many girls that would suit *me*.”

“Chatterbox!” said his mother.

“Let him come to-morrow, Mrs. Silchester,” said Willie, “I will bring him back safely.”

The boy went. He was about nine years old. He prowled over the old house with delight.

“Books! books! books!” he exclaimed.

“What use are books? Papa says they do harm, and I always believe papa. He has lots of books, like you, and sometimes reads them, but he says I am not to read them, and I’m sure I don’t want. Haven’t you anything pleasanter than these things?” he said, contemptuously, tossing in the air a lovely Elzevir, bound in tree-calf.

Thus provoked, Willie took from its case a superb flute, and played upon it *The Flowers of the Forest*. The boy was delighted.

“Ah,” he cried, “that’s music. I don’t call the piano music; it’s a box of strings. Papa teaches me what music means, and I can almost understand the harmonic chords. Hard words, aren’t they? Papa says wind instruments are meant to mock the music of our voices and birds’ voices, and that instruments with strings mock the wind in the trees and on the sea. Your flute is very sweet, but I like the thrush better.”

“Odd boy!” thought Willie, and took from

its hiding-place his most cherished Stradivarius, and played a wild fantastic mixture of melodies.

“Just like the wind in our old wood,” said Sylvester, “when it blows high from the sea. The oak roars, the elm groans, the ash shrieks, the beech shudders, the birch weeps, the poplar hisses, the holly crackles, the fir writhes,—that’s violin music.”

“How do you learn those things?” asked Willie.

“From papa. He takes me to the wood in the wind, and gives me a lesson. I like a thick wood on a dark night. It feels like going into another world.”

The result of this little adventure was that both flute and fiddle soon found their way to Silchester; and in due time Musical Willie gave his friends enjoyment twice or thrice a week. Joan Silchester sang to his violin accompaniment; the Doctor sometimes sang, for he had a good tenor voice, but his ear was

untrustworthy. It was some months before they found out that Musical Willie could sing. Then it was accident. Mrs. Silchester, turning over some music, came on a rough scrap of music and words which have got between the sheets. She mischievously handed it to Willie, saying,

“I am sure you can sing this.”

Musical Willie looked round at his friends with a sly smile that seemed to say, “Well, ye've caught me,” and then cast his eye over the paper.

“Ah,” he said, “Mrs. Silchester, I had forgotten the existence of this, for I made the words and jotted the notes twenty year syne, to laugh at myself for loving a girl who couldn't love me. It's to the tune of *Antony Rowley*.”

“I hope you will sing it, now we have found you out,” said Mrs. Silchester. “After twenty years, these troubles fade.”

“Olim haec meminisse juvabit,” murmured the Squire.

Willie, after a brief pause, began.

The poet would a-wooing go—
Heigh-ho ! says Willie ;
Whether the Muses like it or no,
And whether the lass be willing or no,
She willy-nilly sweeter than metre :
Heigh-ho ! says Musical Willie.

He put himself into the shiniest hat—
Heigh-ho ! says Willie.
The laughing servant-maid smelt a rat
As he walked away so spicy as that,
With his Willie, silly, fairer and rarer :
Heigh-ho ! says Musical Willie.

Sly at him glanced the lovely lass—
Heigh-ho ! says Willie.
And said, “ Do look at yourself in the glass,
For every beau in the town you surpass ! ”
Ah, Willie, your filly rambles and gambols.
Heigh-ho ! sings Musical Willie.

He took up his hat, and he went away—
Heigh-ho ! says Willie.
Neither lips nor eyes invited his stay,
And he sat on his hat the very next day,
With his willy nilly, wooing's undoing :
Heigh-ho ! says Musical Willie.

Plague upon girls that are given to flirt !
Heigh-ho ! says Willie ;
That to tempt a man on are always alert :
Pretty or witty, I view them as dirt,
With their willy-nilly, shilly and shally :
Heigh-ho ! says Musical Willie.

“It is not everybody,” said Squire Silchester, “ who could throw off his annoyance with such humour. I think you have decidedly improved the metre of ‘Froggy would a-wooing go,’ a song which I believe contains political allusions, though I am unable to trace them. Antony Rowley was Charles II. probably.”

“Are young ladies never to flirt?” asked Joan Silchester.

“I think,” said Dr. Sterne, “there are three modes of flirtation,—the scientific, the irregular, the Platonic. Do you agree with me, Mrs. Silchester?”

“Yes,” she said, after slight deliberation.

“Well, won’t you give us a lecture on them? Only a lady can do it.”

“If I must, I will be briefer than most lecturers. Irregular flirtation may be dismissed at once; it is merely the beginning of actual love-making.”

“An oak-sapling and a cucumber-plant come out of the ground about the same size,” said

the Squire. "The sooner irregular flirtation turns to real sweethearts, the better."

"Scientific flirtation," continued the lady-lecturer, "I take to be that relation between a sensible boy and girl of marriageable years who have not any idea of marrying each other, but who want to try the experiment of courting outside the verge of love-making. This is very nice, if kept within due bounds: it teaches the boy politeness, and makes the girl think. He learns the sensitive delicate nature of womanhood; she learns the thoughtful vigorous nature of manhood. But there is a deal of danger in the matter; they may make a mistake, and fancy they have fallen in love, being entirely unfit for each other."

"There's danger in most varieties of flirtation, Joan," said the Squire. "How about the Platonic?"

"I think," she said, "it often occurs between a married woman of strong intellect and a young man, or between a man of wide nature

and advanced years, and a young woman. It is very much the relation between tutor and pupil."

"Which did not answer in the case of Abelard and Héloïse," said the Squire.

"No," said Sterne. "But I hold Mrs. Silchester's views that a married woman, mature without meagreness, and intelligent without pedantry, may teach a boy ten years her junior lessons of life that no one else can teach him."

"And how about the other side, of the question?"

"I am still of Mrs. Silchester's opinion. There are girls unmarried, and unlikely to marry, who throw themselves into all manner of eccentricities because they have no one to teach them how to use their brains. If they know a man of strong intellect and wide culture, with leisure enough to talk to them or write to them half an hour in a month, it furnishes the tonic stimulus that keeps them healthy. Well, they have the Platonic affection

for their teacher—the affection which you and I, Squire, have for Plato."

"A new construction," said Willie.

"It is a pity we cannot find employment," said Mrs. Silchester, "for the girls who are left without husbands. I divide those who have quite passed the boundary of Marriageland into two classes—old maids and maiden ladies. The distinction is not mine. I had it from a lady of this shire who belongs to neither class."

"It is well put," quoth Willie. "You see the old maid. She is selfish, stingy, fussy, gossipy, fond of no company but her cat. The notion *old* is always connected with her, though many very old women look young: the notion *maid* is connected with her rather in the sense of service than in that of virginity."

"Why, Willie, you grow eloquent," said the Squire. "Go on to your maiden lady."

"She," said Willie, "has perchance lost in war or wreck or by disease the only man she

could have married. She remembers him always: the grief of the first memory has turned to a happier recollection, and, as the years pass, strengthens the anticipation of meeting him again. Meanwhile, according to her state of life, she does what is wise and right. She feels no humiliation in being alone, while her sisters are grandmothers and her nieces mothers. She knows that though most marriages are made on earth, there are marriages which will be made in heaven."

"Faith, Willie," said the Squire, "you are in your best humour to-night, eloquent and poetical. My wife is parson and you're clerk. You will have to tip us a stave before we let you go back to your old castle."

Musical Willie complied, and burst out into a few stanzas to the famous old tune of *A Hundred Years Hence*.

Right well to be married
Is woman's best lot;
Her fortune is arid
When wooers come not.

Yet still may she gladden
Her kith and her kin
If her heart does not sadden
For what she can't win.
Send old maids to Hades
On any pretence ;
We'll love maiden ladies
A hundred years hence.

The Queen Aphrodite
Was married, you know ;
Alas, she was flighty,
And rather so-so !
But Athena sedately
Her lesson-books read,
Having risen quite stately
From Zeus-pater's head.
Of old maids one afraid is,
They scandal dispense,
But we'll love maiden ladies
A hundred years hence.

If an old maid you visit,
She offers you tea
Which her grocer explicit
Describes as bohea.
Should she venture to injure
Her scruples with wine,
'Twill be made of the ginger
Or cowslip divine.
A stingy old maid is
Afraid of her pence :
Not so maiden ladies
A hundred years hence.

The cream from their dairy's
As white as the snow ;
In their thin china ware is
True orange pekoe ;
And who ever grumbled
When glass of quaint shape
Holds Sercial that's tumbled
Three times round the Cape ?
A dreary old maid is
A nuisance immense ;
But we'll love maiden ladies
A hundred years hence.

The old maid talks slander,
And picks people's brains,
And loves to meander
Through filthiest lanes.
Our dear maiden lady
Flies far from such strife
To where Shakespeare makes shady
The forest of life.
Send old maids to Hades
On any pretence ;
We'll love maiden ladies
A hundred years hence.

This was the last song that night.

CHAPTER V.

SILCHESTER.

“As one who, long in populous city pent,
Where houses thick and sewers annoy the air,
Forth issuing on a summer’s morn, to breathe
Among the pleasant villages and farms
Adjoined, from each thing met conceives delight ;
The smell of grain, or tedded grass, or kine,
Or dairy, each rural sight, each rural sound.”

SILCHESTER is a village of curious character. In the days when first it was granted to Ranulf de Silchester (*vide* Domesday Book), it was moor and morass for the most part. The lords of the manor through many generations thought more of fighting than of improving their lands ; but they evidently settled into quiet at an early date, since the Squire’s house

bears signs of having been built toward the end of Henry VII.'s or beginning of Henry VIII.'s reign. It seems clear, from ancient documents carefully preserved, that the earlier Silchesters were an adventurous race. They went to the Crusades. They followed their kings to France. They were with Elizabeth's predatory captains, and made many raids upon the Spanish Main. And when wild adventure of this kind came to an end, they seem to have found occupation in England that drew them away from home. They mixed with Elizabethan poets, with wits of the Caroline time. It was not till the accession of the House of Brunswick that they left the Court and London.

Hence it happened that the manor of Silchester was gradually impropriated in its out-lying parts. All sorts of squatters took hold upon it, holding their bits of land by all sorts of tenures. Far in the green depths of the outstretched moorland you might come upon profitable farmlets and pleasant cottages with

orchard ground, held by the yearly service of presenting a fat capon or a bushel of wheat. These very services were forgotten. Probably the Squire might in many cases have redeemed the ancestral grants ; but he had elbow-room, and preferred honest neighbours to increase of income. These small encampments on the outskirts of his manor injured him not a whit, and did infinite good to the people dwelling there. The Squire knew them all, and befriended them all ; and there was not a man for miles round who would not have lost a day's work to do anything for John Silchester.

The village of Silchester is one long straggling street, with a vast number of outlying suburbs. As you enter it from the upper end, the most conspicuous objects are a dissenting chapel and an immense walnut tree. Just at the corner by that mighty tree, one of the largest in the land, a narrow lane swerves to the right, where the earliest white violets are found in spring. This lane is called The Butts,

a reminiscence of old days of archery; but modern sentiment has rechristened it Nightingale Lane. It is the favourite resort of your Devonshire Tityrus and Amaryllis.

The street winds. On the left, the Oak Tavern, kept by old Harry Withers, whose white head and brown gaiters are institutions in Silchester. The man who gets drunk at the Oak will never drink there again. Withers farms under the Squire, and brews his own ale, and stands no nonsense. The next house, hidden among trees and surrounded by a high wall, is what in these days would be called a ladies' seminary—kept by Madame Simonet, a very decided Englishwoman, who is thus called from having married a Frenchman. She bears the repute of being a rigid disciplinarian.

Just opposite, from a cottage overgrown with honeysuckle, there issues a wondrous shrillness of bird-music. If you enter that cottage, you will find two rooms full of bird-cages, fifty in each, perhaps: a true academy of music; for

one cage in each room contains a nightingale, and the others canaries, which that nightingale has to educate ; and when the two nightingales are in full song, with a hundred canaries following them, the jargoning deafens all Silchester. Burrows, the owner of this ornithic cottage, drives the coach from Silchester to Exeter: a born lover of birds, he can gain answers from them at any time as he drives along in the twilight.

Now, also on the right, is Sherwood, attorney-at-law and gentleman by act of Parliament. Sherwood is a gentleman on other grounds ; he is also a humorist ; and, having quite enough to live upon, he has a mania for reconciling litigants. He is unpopular among the lawyers of the neighbourhood. The Squire likes him well enough to invite him to dinner now and then. The fact is that Sherwood, though a thoroughly good fellow, has a slightly boisterous humour.

Next door is Zeal the wine merchant, a

jolly old boy, whose idea of luncheon is Stilton and port wine. Further down on the left is Michael the bookseller, of whom there is nothing to be said except that he knows nothing about books. Then we turn the corner into the market-place—for Silchester actually has a market-place; and we see on a signboard the Silchester Arms; and we see the church and rectory and parish schools just across the rivulet which runs at the bottom of the town.

The church is rather old; the rector is rather young. His name is Arundel Saint Osyth. He is very High Church, and holds daily services, and wears the most amazing costumes. The Squire and he were at Oxford together, but there were several years between them, and in a town and gown row Saint Osyth knocked down a fellow who was just going to settle the Squire from behind. The result was a friendship which in due time made Saint Osyth rector of Silchester. The Squire does not wholly

coincide with Mr. Saint Osyth's propositions and practices ; for the rector wants to make himself father confessor to all the young ladies in the neighbourhood. He has ideas of the sacerdotal function which are too strong for Mr. Silchester. Doubtless marriage will make him wiser.

It is a fine old church, with a keen sky-pointing spire, that looks down upon Silchester market-place. That market-place is one among hundreds, all alike. An irregular trapezoidal space, where on Wednesdays cattle and sheep are penned, while farmers' traps and carriers' carts occupies the rest of the arena. There is the principal inn, down at the corner of the churchyard stile ; and three other houses of entertainment ; and a pastrycook's shop, where music is sold for the benefit of the tradesmen's daughters ; and a little corner where the briskest and most talkative of barbers will be happy, while shaving you or cutting your hair, to tell you all the news of

Silchester; and a chemist's shop of the ordinary village type, whose master would be perplexed if you asked him for hydrate of chloral, or ilicine, or magnesium; and a branch bank from Exeter; and the post-office, kept by a muddle-headed old woman, who also keeps a dame school, and who never can understand how many stamps go for a shilling.

Such is the main street or avenue of Silchester. Its outer fringe of suburban life is more difficult to describe. All wayfarers through England must have met with such places, which require rather the pencil than the pen to describe them. Here a cottage in a quiet dell, with a streamlet surrounding it, and no way to the garden gate except by stepping-stones. Again, a pleasant little homestead with orchard all round it, and a suggestive cider-press reminding those who read the eighteenth century verse of Mr. John Philips's directions to the lover of the apple's wine:—

“Prepare
Materials for thy mill, a sturdy post
Cylindric, to support the grinder’s weight
Excessive, and a flexile sallow entrenched,
Rounding, capacious of the juicy hoard.”

Elsewhere the quaintest old structures of granite, roofed with thatch—standing in all imaginable positions, but mostly having enjoyable views of moorland and sea. And suddenly, as you turn the angle of a beech coppice, you come upon the Doctor’s house—his den, he usually calls it. There are four rooms, all on one floor—parlour, bedroom, laboratory, kitchen. The Doctor’s sole servant’s a boy, who sleeps in a loft over the stable where the Doctor’s nag, Asklepios, is made comfortable. Jim grooms Asklepios, and makes his master’s breakfast; and an old woman who dwells thereby comes in for other purposes; but the house requires no cookery, for the Doctor always dines with the Squire. They are intimate in the highest sense. John Silchester, resolved that his people’s health should not be ruined through ignorance, was

so fortunate as to find a man with real medical capacity who would take charge of his village, for work suited Dr. Sterne, who was only too anxious to retire into the country and complete the Life of Arbuthnot. What happened hereafter was that the Doctor, settling down into his snug though humble cottage, became almost a member of the Squire's household. He might have lived at Silchester, had he liked, but he naturally preferred independence. He was so much there, that when colic attacked a man or multiplication a woman they generally sent first to the Squire's.

John Silchester always maintained that the State ought to provide for the physical health of the poor as well as their moral health. By the side of the established Church he would have had an established Doctorate. As this could not be done, he supplied its place, in his own parish, by engaging a man of the highest medical capacity to attend on his own household and on the people round him. Dr.

Sterne is precisely the man for the position. He is a humorist—first quality both of parson and doctor—not to mention lawyer. He likes the country and the country folk. He is also, what few doctors are, a chemist, and knows in what way the elementary principles act upon each other. He has in his elaboratary salacine, asparagine, vauqueline, digitaline, even the diaboline which blows an hydraulic press to atoms. The saying of Raphël in Balzac's master-work—“*Faute de pouvoir inventer des choses, il parait que vous en êtes réduits à inventer des noms*”—applies not to Dr. Sterne. He is chemist and electrician; traces the elements through all their windings; can make a battery in a lady's thimble. Being both chemist and humorist, two faculties which ought to coalesce in every man who dares call himself doctor, Sterne worked well. He had his cures for both mental and physical maladies. He looked after the young girls in Silchester parish, and gave them severe lectures if they

precociously flirted. Perfectly fearless, and knowing that prevention is better than cure, he did his best to teach the village lout temperance in all things. He was the Squire's adjutant.

Concerning Silchester, there is probably nothing more to be said, except that it is a lovely village. But all villages are lovely. Man preposterously tries to achieve the hideous; but God covers his monstrosities with lichen and ivy, and makes the rain wash them and the sun embrown them; and so they gradually become what it is the fashion to call picturesque. This probably means—fit to make a picture of. It is the most conceited epithet in our language, for it patronizes the Creator.

What in the world would an archæologist say if the most important thing about Silchester were forgotten? It has an immemorial wishing well. Clear water comes up into a granite basin, beneath a granite arch, Norman, or perhaps Saxon. It is the loveliest corner in the

world, woodland all round, and a mountain ash overhanging the well. So rapidly rises the water as to realize Coleridge's exquisite lines—

“Nor ever cease
Yon tiny cone of sand its soundless dance,
Which at the bottom, like a fairy's page,
As merry and no taller, dances still.”

And of course there is a legend. A maiden of the Silchesters, a thousand (more or less) years ago, met beside this fountain a man faint with travel. He was too weak to reach the water, so as to quench his thirst. She not only aided him in his trouble, but brought him up to the house, and gave him food and wine. As he left, he said—“Whoso wishes a true wish after drinking the water of that well, shall have what he wishes.”

And it is recorded that as he passed down the great avenue his stature expanded, and he looked like unto Joseph of Arimathea.

CHAPTER VI.

SILVIA SILVICULTRIX.

“Who is Silvia? What is she
That all our swains commend her?”

THE two children of the house of Silchester grew towards puberty in a way unusual. They learnt much which children never learn; they knew nothing of what other children are obliged to learn. The catechisms of Pinnock the intolerable, the use of the globes, the elements of Euclid, the questions of Richmal Mangnall, were unknown to them. Fortunate children, they learnt nothing but what their father and mother taught them by word of mouth. That being the case, it is pretty

certain that their childish memories were not loaded with latitudes and longitudes and dates. Some years ago an old half-pay colonel, whose son (now himself a colonel) had been plucked in the examination for a direct commission, met the Commander-in-Chief on the steps of a club, and said,

“Your Royal Highness, do you know where Louisville is?”

“Not I,” said the Duke.

“Then it’s a damned shame,” said the old soldier, “that my boy should be plucked for not knowing what your Royal Highness doesn’t know.”

The young gentleman got his commission, and has since proved that he can fight, and make his men fight.

It seems absurd to load children’s memories with facts and dates which can rarely be of use to them. The Squire, when he acted as schoolmaster to the children, taught them geography on the principle that Silchester was the centre

precociously flirted. Perfectly fearless, and knowing that prevention is better than cure, he did his best to teach the village lout temperance in all things. He was the Squire's adjutant.

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every lesson a work of art. The Squire, when he came to put his theories into practice, and to teach his children *vivā voce*, found it rather hard work. He had to go back to the elements of things, which he had digested and forgotten long ago, and to reproduce them in a poetic and rememberable form. It was a fine mental exercise. The *a b c* of knowledge had to be brought back again in a new shape. The Squire did it uncommonly well, and found that in doing it he learnt more than he had learnt at school. He found, what few people know, that the first principles of knowledge are more difficult than those which succeed them. It puzzled him considerably to show his son and daughter that the three angles of any triangle must always be equal to two right angles. The demonstration was done on the sea-sand with a stick,—like most of the old Greek geometry.

When Silvia Silchester passed from babyhood to girlhood—when she reached her teens, and

world, woodland all round, and a mountain ash overhanging the well. So rapidly rises the water as to realize Coleridge's exquisite lines—

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language better than the grown folk who understand the jargon of the Stock Exchange.

Little Silvia gradually began to think. She and her brother knocked about together, of course; but boys go farther afield now and then, and leave their sisters to their own devices. There were times when Silvester went off for a day's shooting or fishing; then, if Papa was in the library, and Mamma in the still-room, little Silvia was lonely. She used to go out into the woods, with Lion as attendant, and think. Her thoughts had no novelty. Every girl has gone through the same process; has tried to find out why she was brought into the world; has wondered what it was she longed for, and could not get. Silvia was differently situate from all other girls, seeing that for her the art of printing had no existence. Her typography was Nature's handiwork—fern and primrose, moss and anemone. She knew the meaning of these. The beauty of the world around her was reflected in her clear

eye ; the music of the woods found echo in her merry voice. The tall folios and massive quartos in the Squire's library were not inviting in comparison with God's own print. She preferred the fir woods—tall spires of foliage above a carpet of moss.

Little Silvia got on excellent well with her brother ; but, being a year of time older than he, she was several years older in development. When she was fourteen, let us say, she thought herself quite a young lady, whereas Silvester was still a boy, with no notions of being "stuck up," and with a tendency to eat bread and cheese with a clasp knife. Brother and sister part company just at this point. The girl is quick ; the boy is slow. The girl has fancies, dreams, visions,—all vague and intangible, but full of a strange enticement. The boy plods quietly along ; eats and drinks, and does his lessons ; thinks his sister rather cracked than otherwise. She, in fact, enters the world earlier than he does ; she puts on her butterfly

plumage when he is tramping along through the Latin lanes of *Propria quæ maribus*; she often appears in the ballroom, a vision of beauty, just when he is mildly requested by a mastigophorous head master to take down his pantaloons. But the sexual reflex is reversed in time: the boy becomes a master, and the girl a slave. There are doubtless reasons, psychological and physiological, for these odd contrasts, but nobody seems to have discovered what they are.

Silvia Silchester had not many friends of her own sex, since the village did not supply any of the class with whom she could associate. Hence she was somewhat lonely except when in her brother's company. It may be questioned whether a girl thus educated is not more fortunate in her isolation than if she associated with many others. Silvia lived alone. She thought for herself. She enjoyed the sea-surf and wood-whirl. She became familiar with Nature, her true mother, and learnt something

of the mysteries which lie around us always and everywhere. Go into a wood at midday or at midnight: be still, and listen: you will find that there are others there whom you cannot see, and that if the fairies do not show themselves, it is because they do not like you.

Silvia loved the woods and streams. Silvia saw fairies. Silvia knew the voice of the naiad in the brook. Silvia had seen dryads, once or twice. So Silvia was not at all annoyed when on that June day, when the silvan screen was perfect delight, she found herself face to face with a handsome boy who might have been Ganymede.

The boy blushed—Silvia did not. They looked into one another's eyes. The boy could not have told the colour of Silvia's five minutes after.

“I hope you will forgive me,” he said. “Can you tell me the way to Silchester?”

“I will show you the way,” she replied. “I live at Silchester. Will you come with me?”

Boy and girl walked together. He was a good-looking young fellow, Silvia thought, but rather shorter than she fancied. What could he want at Silchester?

This question was soon answered when he reached the house. He was the housekeeper's nephew. Silvia made up her pretty little mind never again to be too courteous to strangers. At the same time, she held that if she had made a mistake, it was on the right side.

Politeness is a power.

CHAPTER VII.

SILVESTER.

“Silvestrem tenui musam meditaris avena.”

SILVESTER SILCHESTER turned out a poet; a doom deplorable, but not surprising, all things considered. His father taught him all that he knew in rhythmical form: no wonder the boy imagined rhythm the natural mould of thought. Probably the Squire might have modified his process of education, had he known what would be its result. He knew well enough the fate of poets; that some blindness has seized, and some madness, and all poverty. It never

crossed his mind that his son would turn poet, and attempt to amaze the world.

Silvester had no such notion in his head till he reached the period of hobbydehoyhood. Then he began to ask himself many questions, prompted by his introduction to the marvellous land of romance which was thrown open to English intellects by the Elizabethan drama. Then it suddenly occurred to him that there was a great brain behind Hamlet, Othello, Rosalind, Portia, Romeo and Juliet ; that these were not real characters, though to him and the general world they were more real than the present occupant of the throne or first minister ; and that one Shakespeare, of whom no man knows much, created these folk, and gave them immortality. So he thought this : “ Why should not some one else also create ? I am no Shakespeare, but I have some slight idea of men and women. Why should I not describe men and women as Shakespeare did, though with far less power ? ”

What perplexed our young poet at first was his absolute ignorance of the art of writing. He made magnificent verses (in his own judgment) as he wandered over the moorland or sailed across the sea; but when he tried to recall them they were gone as completely as the Sibyl's first six books, or the ten lost tribes of Israel. Still, as he tested his memory, its power increased, and he soon carried about with him a boyish poem, made in tetrastichs, which had grown in his brain day after day. His father had taught him the metre from Gray's "Long Story."

"The lady of this legend old,
Which in our book-room we have by us,
Was, if the actual truth be told,
Pretty and pleasant, pert and pious.

On Sunday she to church would go,
On other days to picnics jaunted ;
She wanted something ; did not know
What in the world it was she wanted.

She was a wicked little witch
(Whom long ago one might by law burn) ;
Her eyes were bright, her voice was rich,
Her bosom carved, her tresses auburn.

Now on a certain Christmas time,
At Silchester was mighty revel,
And mummers came with idiot rhyme,
And love and punch both played the devil.

Entered a mask with mighty beard
And trident ; while the fiddles kept tune :
Right through the dancing crowd he steer'd,
Keeping his character of Neptune.

He to the lady bent his knee,
And first she blush'd, and then grew paler,
For no one in the room but she
Knew Neptune was a common sailor.

It is, of course, extremely sad
That girls such fancies are entrapped in ;
But this I know, this sailor lad
Married my aunt, and died post-captain.

He fought his foe, he loved his lass,
Construed *amo, amas, amavi*,
And with a seventy-four could pass
Right through old Bonyparty's navy."

This I think was Silvester's first attempt at rhyme; and when he recited it to his father, he obtained a certain amount of kindness. It was kindness not wholly severed from censure.

"Verse of that kind, my dear boy," said John Silchester, "does you credit, for at your

age there are few boys who know the difference between verse and prose. You have fluency and ease ; don't allow that faculty of rhyming to deafen your ear to the exquisite music which English metres contain ;—English, in the hands of a great poet, is capable of music as various as any language of which I have knowledge. I should like you to be a poet, Silvester, but I don't want you to be a poetaster. Milton defines true poetry as 'simple, sensuous, passionate.' Keep those conditions in your mind. They are the keys to the supreme art."

"I wish you would explain that, father," said the boy.

Father and son had wandered together into a quaint old orchard, where that famous apple, the Devonshire red-streak, had grown from time immemorial. They were ancient trees, bowed earthward by age ; but they still bore ample fruit, and were game to the last. What is thoroughbred endures—whether a horse or a tree, a man or a woman.

“ The most perfect simplicity, Sylvester, is the characteristic of the highest poetry. You have, as Coleridge said, the best words in the best order. Never should any sentence be inverted or any word used, for the sake of rhyme or rhythm. The sentences of a *great* poem should be as easy as those of a familiar letter. Catullus runs as clear as Pliny.”

“ But it is difficult, father,” said the boy.

“ All things worth doing are difficult, and difficulties were made to be overcome. You amuse yourself with difficult rhymes. You are quite right—it will give you command of language. But a great poet in a great poem will only use rhymes of that character with a definite purpose. Rhyme should have its reason. Rhythm is more important than rhyme, and rhythm requires much study. Chaucer and Shakspeare are its masters. Milton was a pedant in rhythm, for want of ear. Byron, on the other hand, with true rhythmical capacity, sinned from sheer ignorance. He had no lite-

rature. In *Childe Harold* he always bisects his Alexandrines, and never uses the musical pause at the seventh syllable."

"Well, father," said the youngster, who was lying on the grass, and munching a green apple that looked like a spheroid of colic, "I think I almost understand about poetry being simple. What do the other two words mean—sensuous and passionate?"

"Poetry," replied John Silchester to his son, "should appeal to the senses. It should deal with what men see, hear, taste, smell, touch. There is poetry in a daffodil or a glass of wine; there is none in a geometric problem or a syllogism. Pure science deals with skeletons: its points have no parts or magnitude; its ropes are inflexibly rigid. Poetry deals with things as they are—with the world as God made it—with flesh and blood, and flower and fruit, and love and hate, and good and evil. Hence must it deal with those things that reach us through the senses."

"I like poetry better than science," said the young rascal in the grass, munching another apple. "But what does the word *passionate* mean, father?"

"What children like you who write verses cannot by any means understand. We have many passions, of which love is chief; and I doubt not that you will in time know the meaning of that word; but as yet you have got no farther than to admire that young person behind Dyer's counter who serves you with rhubarb tarts, and is old enough to be your mother."

Silvester blushed. Miss Applegate had now and then flirted with the handsome boy, the Squire's son. She was a buxom florid wench, more like Phebe than Rosalind. She meant no harm: it was only the pleasure of talking to a pleasant young gentleman across the counter.

"You may make your poetry simple and sensuous," continued the Squire, "and that is all you can do as yet. Passionate you

cannot make it, until you are a man instead of a boy. Of course you may imitate the thoughts of others, but that is sheer waste of time. You may create a sham Juliet, but you will be dressing a doll,—and you are too old to dress dolls. Think in verse as much as you like, but think your own thoughts, and deal with what you see and hear."

Such was the advice which John Silchester gave his son when he first took to verse. Silvester pondered over it many days. The lesson was a hard one for a poetic boy, apt to mistake fine words for eloquence, apt to reflect the thoughts of others, and imagine them his own. Even men of practised brain find it hard to determine whether an idea is home-born, or has passed through the crucible of memory. The metaphor of a "scalding hinge" occurs in the works of two living poets: did one unconsciously rob the other, or did both borrow from some earlier source? When writers of the highest art make these mistakes, no wonder

they are made by the heedless boy when he first rambles through the enchanted gardens of Poesy. In that haunted region he picks asphodel, and thinks it a new flower; he meets a naiad by the rivulet, unknowing that Hylas did the same when the most famous of frigates was steered

“Phasidos ad fluctus et fines Aeetacos.”

All things are new to him, all things strange: how should he guess that the ideas brought to his mind have passed through the boyish brains of innumerable others?

When Silchester had thought over his father's lecture for some days, he talked to Silvia about it. It was a fair spring holiday. Winter had been early defeated by his immortal adversary. The larches were a mist of green. The thrush was singing all day long. Brother and sister were going to make a long day of it, down in that wild portion of the demesne where the little river is wide enough

for a boat. They were a picture. The girl, short-frocked as yet, though almost beyond the age at which young ladies begin to conceal their ankles, might remind a spectator of the Greek's description—παρθένος ὄνυρεσιφοιτος, ἐρήμαδ· σύντροφος ὥλη. As she wore green serge, she looked forest-born. The boy, in jacket of the same stuff, with the old-fashioned white collar over his shoulders, and breeches of useful cord, was as lithe and agile as a greyhound. Silvia, it has been said, was a big girl; but Sylvester could lift her over a gate, or across a brook, without an effort. He could jump his own height. He could swarm up a branchless beech-trunk, smooth almost as an Athenian column. He could run and swim and skate to perfection. There was not a weak point in him *yet*, thanks to his fine constitution and wise training.

They got into a boat, and he rowed his sister into the odd little land-locked estuary, a Lilliput reflex of Dartmouth harbour. Rest-

ing on your oars in this pellucid basin among small hills, you may hear the sea just beyond, but cannot perceive the outlet to it. There the two young people held their confabulation, Silvester having explained to his sister as well as he could his father's lecture. She, fretting the water with her long brown fingers, splashed it in her brother's face, and said,

“ Pshaw, Silvester, you a poet !”

Girls laugh at the ambition of boys, and boys at the vanity of girls; and it does both good to be laughed at. Yet who would care for a boy without ambition—or a girl without vanity ?

“ I mean to be a poet, Miss Silvia,” said he, “ and to make verse that shall last. Chaucer's is my vein, I think. You are a pert young minx, though you presume so much on having come into the world a little earlier than I. The only difference is that I brought later news from the last world.”

“ O dear ! what dreadful nonsense the boy

talks ! Go on. I like 'nonsense on a warm day. I like to be instructed by my younger brother."

" You won't be serious. Girls are always giggling. I wanted you to tell me what you think of the three requisites of poetry according to Milton,—that it should be simple, sensuous, passionate."

" I think you could do all three to perfection. You're a simpleton, you've no sense, and your verses will put everybody in a passion. There, will that do ?"

" O yes, Miss Silvia, that will do," said Silvester, with a good-humoured laugh. " You can't be serious this morning. You are in love."

" I'm *not!* " she exclaimed, with emphasis and indignation.

" Yes, you are,—and I know the happy individual."

" Who ? "

" Yourself."

Silvia nearly upset the boat in trying to punish her brother with the boathook. He retaliated in verse :—

“ A little girl escaping from the nursery,
And somewhere near her fifteenth anniversary,
Despised her dolls, wished to be some one's 'Missus,'
And woo'd herself, like our old friend Narcissus.
Early at morn, upon her first emergence,
Her mirror show'd her the most fair of virgents ;
At noon she saw a lovely figure shiver,
Over the boat's side, on Silchester river ;
At night this most conceited little lass
Returned to her first love, the looking-glass,
Which flattered her, of course, but gave her warning
She had been growing stouter since the morning.”

Silvia's boathook put an end to this mischievous rhyme, and Silvester caught a crab.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN EVENT AT MOUNT ST. NICHOLAS.

“And now, all in my own countree,
I stood on the firm land.”

SILVIA and Silvester, growing older, grew also wiser, let us hope: any way, a lustrum passed, and many events occurred, and neither boy nor girl could read or write. They knew many things not generally known by young folk, but they did not know their *a b c*. All the alphabets of all the ages were utterly despised. The only alphabet they knew was the alphabet of nature. When the girl was twenty and the boy nineteen they had not troubled themselves to open a book. Books, it has been noted,

were not forbidden fruit ; there was free access to an overflowing library ; and once or twice the brother and sister had taken counsel together as to whether they should teach themselves to read. Their decision was against it. They were reading the book of the world, whose pages are illuminated differently every hour by the almighty printer. So, although the noble library at Silchester became every day more tempting, and although much fun was made under many circumstances of a young lady and gentleman unable to read or write, they held to their father's opinion ; only Silvester got his father to show him how to form his autograph, in case of any legal document requiring signature, and so learnt nine letters of the English alphabet in the form of

SILVESTER SILCHESTER.

It is hard to say whether Silvia or Silvester most perplexed the general folk by their ignorance of what everybody is supposed to know.

In process of time they made acquaintances who proposed correspondence. At Bath, for example, when Silvia was there for a week or two in the winter with an ancient maiden aunt, she got into several difficulties. Aunt Cornelia was an inveterate novel reader, and sent her niece to a library in Milsom Street to get some dreadful story of the day. Silvia asked for it. The polite young gentleman behind the counter pointed it out to her.

"Excuse me," she said. "Be good enough to take it down for me. I cannot read."

Incredulous, he smiled, but did as he was bid. He was however so muddled by her averment that he gave her two volumes, the first and third of one novel, with the second of another sandwiched between them. Aunt Cornelia did not find it out.

On another occasion she met a young gentleman of the Captain Absolute type, who fell over head and heels in love with her. He was a Cornish man with Irish blood, on

the mother's side, and his name was Tiger-nach Tregarva. He was about seven feet high, and looked as if he had lately come from Brobdignag. T. T. was a gentleman, though rather a dull one, and he made hot love to our Silvia one night at the Assembly Rooms, when Aunt Cornelia was playing whist. Next morning she got a letter from him, a mad mixture of prose and verse, expressing his belief that she was an angel, and his determination to die that day if he could not be her husband. Silvia called her maid, Dorothy Chalker, to read it to her; and having heard it read, and laughed over it, made Dorothy reply. Thus ran the maid's answer, *verbatim et literatim*.

“SIR,—My Missus says she isn't a hangle, and thinks you uses opprobriocious language. Likewige if you is such a fule as to dye before my letter reaches you, who is it to be delivered to? My Miss Sylvia never writes nor reads, which is because she thinks those things befit lawyers and parsons and milliners and such, and she hopes you'll marry a lady of your own sect, and be

happy for ever more, which comes hopping from your umble
servent,

“ DOROTHY CHALKER.”

The brother and sister were both fond of the society of Musical Willie, whom the lapse of years rendered gayer and more musical. There are some men whose happy destiny it is to laugh through life ; careless fellows, who make fun of their own troubles, realizing the old dramatist's couplet, which I quote, with a difference—

“ What need of music, comic songs, and sherry,
When our own miseries can make us merry ? ”

Willie's cheery talk and pleasant songs were peculiarly agreeable to Silvester, himself on the whole more seriously inclined ; and they had many an afternoon together on the sands at Mount St. Nicholas, where the beach is on both sides walled in by tall red cliffs, that seem to shut the outlet of the little village from all the rest of the world.

One day they were thus loitering and dis-

coursing, Willie (who was a Scot, after all) proving *ore rotundo* that Burns was at least equal to Shakespeare, when they saw a little undocked boat, long and sharp in its build, with a lateen sail such as you see on the Mediterranean, rapidly approaching the long narrow pier used by the fishermen.

“That's a curious craft,” said Willie.

“Foreign, I suppose,” said Silvester.

They watched the new arrival with interest. There was only one person on board, a tall black-bearded man, who wore a white shirt and duck trousers, and a broad-brimmed grass hat. He took in the sail, unstepped the mast, tied his boat to the pier, and walked rather slowly to the beech.

“A foreign invader,” said Willie.

“Very like a pirate,” quoth Silvester. That boat is an Italian rig, if one may trust the pictures of such things.”

“I dare say the *phaselus* your favourite poet built was just such another.”

Meanwhile the new comer was approaching them, and they could see he was a man about forty, built very much on the model of the son of Alkmēnē, *θρασυμέμνων, θυμολέων*. As he came near they could see a pair of pistols in his leather belt, and a sharp, long stiletto without a sheath. As Silvester had remarked, he did look slightly piratical. But he raised his hat to them in polite fashion, showing a thick crop of black hair, cut very short, and said, in excellent English,

“I beg your pardon, gentlemen, but is this Mount St. Nicholas?”

Willie said it was, and asked if he could be of any service to him.

“You are very kind,” he replied. “I have been away from England almost twenty years, and am come here to look for the only relation I have in the world, so far as I know. His name is Nairn.”

“Why, it can’t be!” exclaimed Musical Willie, in an excited mood. “You’re not

Watty Nugent! Everybody thought you were dead, years ago. Why in the world did you vanish so suddenly, just as we all thought you were going to make a name in the world?"

"I'll tell all you about it some time or other, uncle. At this present moment I should like something to eat and drink. My provisions got spoilt with salt water in a squall early this morning."

"Come along," said Willie. "We'll supply your hunger. The boat will be safe."

"I'm not afraid of that," he said. "I've left a tame panther in it that's a great pet of mine, and I don't think anybody will touch it if she shows her teeth. You need not look alarmed: she is chained to the boat, and besides she is as quiet as a spaniel."

They climbed the steep hill to the Manor House, where the wanderer was soon hard at work on cold beef and strong ale, both which he seemed to rejoice in.

"I cannot understand," said Willie, "why

you left London so suddenly. Do you remember all about it? We walked home from some place where we had been supping——”

“The Cheshire Cheese, wasn’t it?”

“Yes. There were several of us, and we left you at the gateway of Middle Temple Lane. I had to go back to Scotland the next morning. Of course, as you never would write letters, I did not expect to hear from you; but when I next visited London, you were gone, and had left no trace.”

“It was too bad not to tell you, uncle, seeing you were my only near relation; but I was mad at the moment. You remember—but first let me ask you a question—yet I don’t know, I think there’s no need.”

“What is the lad driving at?” said Willie.

“I guess from the general look of your room, uncle, that you’re either a bachelor or a widower. Which is it?”

“A bachelor, Walter,—one of the jolly bachelors of Moray.”

"Well, uncle, do you remember pretty Jessy Blair of Elgin, the lass with blue eyes and yellow hair, that everybody went mad about?"

"I should rather think I did," quoth Willie, for indeed she was the heroine of that song which went to the tune of *Antony Rowley*. "What about that light o' love?"

"Why, she made pretence to love me, the little flirt; and when I came away from Elgin she wrote me letters, very nice at first, but colder and colder gradually, and then, the very day you speak of, in answer to a furious letter of mine, I got one from her saying there were better men than I in Elgin."

"Just like her," said Willie, laughing. "A born jilt;—she'd have married the devil, and played tricks on him after."

"Well, uncle Willie, you remember that over the whisky punch that night you told me you fancied her, and were going to ask her when you got home. I thought she was safe to have you, and I felt that I could never come

near you again afterwards. So off I went,— and have been all over the world since."

"And made money, I hope," said Willie, *more Scotorum.*

"Heaps, my dear uncle. There's a chest down in the boat in charge of my panther, Cleopatra, that would astonish a Jew covetous of jewels. Look here." He took from a pouch in his belt a rough diamond about the size of a hen's egg, and a nugget of gold that might weigh a dozen pounds.

"A man gave me that nugget in California, because I had nursed him through a fever, and he had more than he could carry away. The diamond I found in Brazil, and had to fight for. A couple of fellows heard I had it, and watched me to a wayside tavern, and attacked me at midnight in my sleep. They didn't count on Cleopatra, who was sleeping under my bed, and who flew upon them furiously. One scoundrel lost half a leg, and the other I had nearly squeezed to a mummy."

“ You have had some adventures,” said Willie.

“ Adventures numberless. Why that little boat of mine—the *Jessy*, I christened her, in honour of you know who, uncle—but she has been more faithful than her godmamma, and has traversed with me a myriad leagues of sea. Didn’t I astonish the gondoliers when I ran her into Venice a year ago, and walked up the square of St. Mark with Cleopatra at my heels?”

“ And how did you get Cleopatra?” asked Willie.

“ She was given me by a Nubian negro—the tallest and blackest fellow I ever saw. She was a baby then. This man, whose name was Hathor, and who professed to be descended from an ancient Ethiopian god, had formed a menagerie in a temple attached to one of the pyramids near Gebel-el-Birkel. The people of his tribe fully believed his divine origin, partly because of his colossal stature, and

partly by reason of his power over all wild creatures."

"You seem to have met with some remarkable people *μετ' ἀμύμονας Αἰθιοπῆς*. I am not surprised that the Homeric gods were wont to visit that region, and picnic with its ebony inhabitants. Your negro Hathor must have been worth knowing."

"He was. He lived in this temple, which has chamber within chamber, the inmost being hotter from want of air than the hottest room of a Roman bath. I had travelled thus far to see the old inexplicable ruins and the thirteen pyramids, and was surprised to see this gigantic black striding toward me, followed by a tame crocodile. He addressed me in Amharic; and as I know most languages, I had no difficulty in talking to him. He offered me welcome, and we dined together on soup made from a baby hippopotamus, which had only the one fault, that it was too good."

"Did you stay there long?" asked Willie.

"A month or two,—I forget exactly. Hathor showed me all the wonderful old temples and pyramids, and I made acquaintance with his animals, and I found out that even black people have souls. They are nearer the animals than we, and so understand them better. Hathor could quell by the power of his eye the most ferocious lion or tiger. Cleopatra, then a kitten, took a great fancy to me, so I brought her away with me."

When Silvester came in to dinner, he had something to tell his father and mother and sister. They were all astonished by the new arrival. Musical Willie's advent many a year before had been a romance in its way; but the coming of this nephew of his, like a wandering bird, with a knowledge of all regions and of all languages, was quite a sensation.

There was much talk at Silchester that evening about Walter Nugent. Silvester had been

struck by this splendid Heraklide, who patted a tame panther and laughed at big diamonds. The Squire was much amused at the adventures of Willie's nephew. Mrs. Silchester thought that Jessy must have been a wicked little witch to make such mischief. Silvia thought (but I don't think said) that she should like to see the man who had wandered over the world with a panther for companion.

It was not very long before Musical Willie's nephew was on excellent terms at Silchester. After such long wandering, the quiet of an English country house was grateful to him. With the Squire he got on capitally. He had amazing traveller's tales, true enough, yet not at first sight credible. He had also some that probably were not true.

"There is a pool in Egypt," he said, "close to one of the smaller pyramids, which is always dry in winter and always full in summer. If you go there on the night of the full moon, you may see the likeness of any one you

choose, by simply wishing. I wished to see a girl I once thought myself madly in love with; and there in Egypt, under the calm moonlight, the water reflected a very stout woman in a back room, with several children snivelling around her."

"Did you ask for any one else?" said Sylvia.

"Yes, I asked for my uncle Willie, here, and found him lazily lying on the sea-sand with a cigar. I thought, you know, he would have been married, with a pleasant family of children around him."

"Travellers have seen strange sights since the days of Homer and Herodotus," observed the Squire. "Did you come across a Cyclops or a Siren?"

"I don't think you can travel far without meeting them," replied Nugent. "The half-blind fool endowed with brutal strength occupies the world, but we are compensated by the pretty girl who tempts us by loveliness and song."

“Your method of dealing with such things is worthy of a disciple of Odysseus the wanderer,” said Willie. “What would Rob Burns have said if he had traversed the same ground?”

“Perhaps you’ll tell us, Willie,” said the Squire.

Whereupon Musical Willie began to improvise:

“The hero left his wife and boy,
And went to join the siege of Troy ;
He didn’t want the long annoy
That sieges bring,
Nor was he anxious to destroy
The Asian king.

But then, you see, he gave his oath
On Helen’s marriage—pledged his troth,
Was bound to go, however loth,
And bravely try a
Fight with his foes. It made thee wroth,
Penelopia.

Away he went to Asia’s coast,
Advised, amazed, assured the host,
Taught Agamemnon not to boast,
And thrashed Thersites ;
Talked, laughed, and fought, always foremost
Where fun or fight is.

Then he returned ;—his fluent lips so
Delighted Circe and Calypso,
He scarce could give those dames the slip so
Soon as he wished ;
But Hermes helped him on his trip, so
The girls were dished.

But with the help of her who came,
From brain of Zeus, like sudden flame,
The wanderer made noble aim
With bow and arrows,
Smiting the suitor mob, as tame
As chirping sparrows.

"Well done, Willie," said the Squire, "you are the Homer of Scotland."

CHAPTER IX.

LOUISA.

“ From all theology apart,
What multitudinous questions start !
We write from left to right : just say
Why Hebrews write the other way :
Inverted every luckless line is,
And the queer book begins at *Finis*.
Take Chemistry : Potassa’s daughter
Takes fire whene’er she touches water.
Take mathematic formula,
Most difficult to rhyme, you’ll say :
Add one, one-fifth, one-ninth, and so on,
Subtract one-third, one-seventh, and go on
Forever, and you’ll find out thus
The ratio of the radius . . .
The law of spreading circles shown,
When in a pool you throw a stone ;
The law whose equal movement deals
With argets, hoops, and carriage wheels ;
That firms the rainbow’s arch sublime,
And makes Louisa’s watch keep time.”

THE Reverend Arundel Saint Osyth was,
about the time which our narrative has
reached, joined by his niece, sole child of his

elder brother, Louisa Osyth Saint Osyth. She was left an orphan at eighteen, her father and mother dying within a month of each other ; but she was left with a good estate and a wise and kind guardian in her bachelor uncle. Louisa had two peculiarities : she was very High Church and very learned. She was no impostor in this last, like the immortal Doña Inez. She read Greek and wrote Latin. Some of her Latin hymns had delighted the bishop of the diocese, especially one beginning

“Consolator, felix avis !
Semper amans, semper suavis.”

She was as incapable of a false quantity as of a *faux pas*. Moreover, Louisa was a geometerian, and an algebraist, and knew lots of things unknown to the ordinary wearers of petticoats. With all which, Louisa was devoid of intellectual vanity, having indeed learnt enough to estimate the immense regions of knowledge which no mortal mind shall ever traverse.

Miss Saint Osyth was some time in Silchester before she grew at all intimate with the Squire's family. The Squire, a very good churchman in the Christian sense, was not particularly interested in the Rector's earnest experiments. They got on very well in the parish, because they never interfered with each other. The Squire was always ready to supply money for charitable purposes, and knew that in the rector he had a wise and equitable almoner. If recalcitrant parishioners complained that their parson robed himself too pavonically, or made the church too radiant at Easter, the Squire quietly reminded them that he preached intelligible sermons, and was good to the poor. Certes, the Rector took to preaching capital sermons of a simple sort at a certain date, though previously he had been much given to casuistry, and to finding double meanings in his texts. He took to simplicity soon after Louisa's arrival, and the Squire told his wife that he was sure that young lady made his sermons.

Did she? She did. After one or two Sundays at church she found herself bewildered by her uncle's ontology. He was more perplexing than Athanasius. He was always demolishing the Sabellians, or the Pelagians, or some other heretics that were forgotten long before the time of dear oysters. Louisa, sitting Sunday after Sunday in the Rector's pew in the chancel, got very tired of these unintelligible disquisitions, and at last was driven to protest. It happened in this wise.

The Rector, on Sunday, always ate supper. It was a day when he had no time to dine. His cook, a mistress of her art, used to dish him up a homely supper at about nine—a bit of steak and some asparagus, perhaps, or some broiled bones and potatoes boiled in their jackets, or an omelet. After exhausting himself over metaphysical sermons that puzzled himself, and his niece, and the parish—and would have puzzled the Squire, if the Squire ever listened—he needed refection. Over those

little suppers the Rector used to get pleasant, and enjoyed his sequent glass of port.

At this time Louisa attacked him ; just when he had supped well, and was regarding the becs-wing in his goblet as affectionately as a poet regards a spark of absolute light in a sunset.

“ Uncle,” suddenly said Louisa, “ I wish you’d let me write your sermons.”

“ Really,” said the Rector, “ the female children of the present age are remarkably precocious. What is the reason of your wish Louisa ?”

“ Because nobody in this stupid parish can understand you—not even the Squire. Those beautiful sermons of yours ought to be printed and addressed *ad clerum*. I think I could write you some sermons that would do for the people who live in this parish.”

“ Try, child,” said the Rector, and lighted his cigar.

She tried. She took for her first text, “ Give us this day our daily bread.” She

tried as much as possible to use monosyllables and dissyllables. She began with the statement that daily bread was not to be had if God chose to stop it. His power kept in existence both the materials of bread and the makers of bread. We sow wheat: God makes it to grow. Every blade, every ear, shows the presence of God—and so on.

Then further—are we not afraid of God? If so, we are fools; afraid of Him who made us; afraid of our best Friend. As you pass through the woods or fields, there is a flower—primrose or anemone—God's gift to you. You hear the song of thrush or redbreast—God's minstrel. God would be near to you, and you put pale superstitions between Him and yourself. If you are afraid to meet God, no wonder you are on excellent terms with that dreadful rascal the devil.

For the devil is a gentleman of the latest fashion, and knows all the latest vices. He loves all forms of untruth and rascality. Some

people don't think he actually exists ; but if he does not exist, it proves that there is a lurking devil in all of us. Does it not urge you to do a thing, my beloved brethren, if you think it rather wrong than otherwise ?

This was the sort of sermon, or sermonette, that Louisa wrote for her uncle. Her uncle preached them cheerfully, and became unexpectedly popular. For Louisa knew the parish, and would descend upon any troublesome customer like a flash of lightning. The Rector had been in the habit of proving that the three persons of the Trinity, though distinct, were absolutely one ; his niece pointed her sermons at people who did not keep the commandments.

It was quite a change in the Silchester Sundays. Louisa's sermons were a success. They went straight to the consciences of several people who before were not aware that they had consciences. The Rector had been dealing with abstractions. Louisa went in for the concrete.

She vilified the vices of the vicinage. It was wonderfully clever of her to know all about the vices of the vicinage—but some young ladies *are* wonderfully clever.

On a day in the month of May when the spring came slowly up that way, and the boughs began to swing and sway, and the larks were mad, and the linnets gay, and the sky was a strange divine blue and gray, it chanced that Louisa making way to some old pensioner grim and gray, who would soon be about five feet of clay, met our young friend Silvester astray, in search of amusement I dare say.

Now an introduction was not necessary, because the Rector had brought his niece to see the Squire, only Silvester chanced not to be at home. Louisa drooped her eyelids. Silvester blushed. They looked at each other in that decisive way which means mischief or marriage. Silvester was a tall fellow for his age; had run up a little too fast, would be as

strong as Herakles in a year or two, and as handsome as Apollo. Louisa was rather less rapid in her physical movement, plumper, more decidedly a young woman.

Well, in Nightingale Lane, where came the earliest violets, these two young folk had a talk. Shall it be repeated?

SILVESTER.—I am so sorry I did not see you when you called, Miss Saint Osyth. I hope you like this part of the world.

LOUISA.—It seems delightful. There never was a more charming village than Silchester. Don't you consider yourself very fortunate to live here?

SILVESTER.—I have always found myself fortunate. What greater good fortune could I have than to meet you this morning?

LOUISA.—You are given to flattery. I know very well what I am, and I cannot place myself beside one of Shakespeare's creations.

SILVESTER.—Then I will place you there.

You deserve to be placed on a pedestal, if only for making your uncle's sermons.

LOUISA.—Pray how did you know they were mine?

SILVESTER.—Well, clearly they were not his, and I do not think his old butler could have produced those sharp satiric sermonettes. No, my dear Miss Louisa, I think I must put these wickednesses down to you. I'll forgive you, on one condition.

LOUISA.—What is it?

SILVESTER.—Marry me.

LOUISA.—To-day?

SILVESTER.—Not necessarily; but when a girl has said *Yes*, she is married. You are my wife from this moment, Louisa, if you *say yes*.

LOUISA.—I *say yes*, my dear love . . . and I am yours always. But the Squire will say you're very young.

SILVESTER.—Do you think I'm afraid of the Squire? It's impossible to be afraid of him, and impossible not to love him.

LOUISA.—Then I, who have lost a father, shall have another father.

SILVESTER.—You will, my darling. I am not in the least afraid of what my father will say on the subject. I am amused in conjecture. He will probably think you are too good for me, too wise, too instructed, which indeed you are. Fancy! You are the cleverest girl in Devon, and I can neither read nor write!

LOUISA.—Neither read nor write! How very odd! But this is a world in which reading and writing are not indispensable.

SILVESTER.—Having never learnt my alphabet, I rejoice to hear you say so. But are you disposed to take charge of a poor fellow who has never learnt his alphabet, and to write letters for him and keep his accounts?

LOUISA.—It requires consideration, no doubt; but then unluckily I have already said *yes*. You were in such a hurry, you know. You were *puer somno devinctus*. Had you not better retrace your steps and let us think over the matter?

SILVESTER.—Too late, child. In love, we Silchesters have always been prompt. I should regret to belie my race. You may be *puella excincta*, by-and-by. You will remark that I know something of Latin, though I do not deign to read it.

LOUISA.—I shall teach you. I shall be your governess, and make you learn under penal conditions. You will find me a very harsh and stern task-mistress. And now there is another matter on which I require information. Are you a sound Churchman?

SILVESTER.—Not too sound. That would be a pity.

LOUISA.—Why?

SILVESTER.—Because one's wife ought to have something to teach one. Now you will have a lot of things to teach me—among them the alphabet and theology. I fear my father is slightly heterodox, so I can hardly expect, without instruction, to be up to your mark. You

will have to make a catechism to suit your adult pupil.

LOUISA.—On the principle of “cross questions and crooked answers,” I suppose. No, thank you, Mr. Silchester.—I am not going to be laughed at. I shall take back my *yes* if you are troublesome.

SILVESTER.—You can’t, without felony. That *yes* is mine—I defy you to steal it. Let me tell you.

“A couple of thousand years ago
There’s a legend little girls said *No*—
Which they don’t say now, you may easily guess.
If you look, when the game of love is played,
At the lips of a maid, you’ll see they’re made
To say to a sweetheart, Yes, *Yes*, YES.

Eve to Adam may have said *No*,
But that was a myriad years ago ;
And Eve’s career was rather a mess.
Little girls just now are too wise to fade,
'Tis their happy trade to be betrayed
Into saying lovingly, Yes, *Yes*, YES.”

LOUISA.—You are a naughty boy. You think you know much more than you really

know. I like you; I think I love you; but I can see you are dreadfully vain and conceited. Now I want to talk to you seriously. Suppose we marry?

SILVESTER.—It is more than a supposition. We *are* married. I defy any man to approach you after this.

LOUISA.—Fierce boy! So you think I am henceforth your property?

SILVESTER.—Beyond doubt. Any gentleman who touches those pretty lips will do it at his peril. There's some iron in my blood, Louisa.

LOUISA.—O you pugnacious boy! I like you all the better for being able to fight, and willing. But, all the same, I mean to keep you in order. Promise—you will obey me.

SILVESTER.—When I feel obedient.

LOUISA.—Always. I mean you to do what I tell you, and if you don't, I shall punish you.

SILVESTER.—How?

LOUISA.—O there are many ways. “*Si nocte*

marita aversa jacuit." I spoil my quantities to suit my notions. I mean to be mistress: so if you object, withdraw.

SILVESTER.—I do not object. Still how do you, with your High Church ideas, construe the words, "Love, honour, and *obey*?"

LOUISA.—Surely it is not unfair, if you get two-thirds of the prescription: I will love and honour you, and you shall obey me.

SILVESTER.—A charming arrangement. I wonder how long will it last?

The boy and girl kissed each other, and emerged from Nightingale Lane.

CHAPTER X.

IN LOVE.

“Ulcus enim vivescit, et inveterascit alendo.”

SILVESTER SILCHESTER told his father everything: the moment he got home that afternoon he looked for him, found him loitering on the lawn, and confessed what he had done.

The Squire laughed.

“Tell me all about it,” he said. “In Nightingale Lane, eh, you young rascal? Well, it is almost time you began, and you could not find a nicer child than little Louisa . . . though, by the way, she is nearly as big as you are, I should think. Come up to the library: I want a book.”

The Squire stepped through the open window, brought out his favourite Lucretius, and translated to his son upon the lawn, in rough-and-ready hexameters, the last two or three hundred lines of the fourth book *de Rerum Natura*.

Silvester listened most reverently. It was by no means his first introduction to the great poetic interpreter of Epicurus. When the Squire had finished, and shuf the book, there was silence for a few minutes. They were standing together, father and son, under a young Canadian oak, which, though about fifty years old only, was at least fifty feet high.

“Lucretius Carus was a wise poet, father,” said the boy.

“He was when he said—

‘Medio de fonte leporum
Surgit amari aliquid, quod in ipsis floribus angat.’

You will find it out, my dear boy. You love Louisa Saint Osyth,—and I don’t believe

you could find anybody better worth loving between Tamar and Humber. But, remember this, she is a woman. Women must have faults. Men may be faultless, I believe, though I have not seen many specimens. Women, poor creatures, have always been imperfect since Eve found she could resist anything except temptation. The great poet I have just been turning into doubtful English is singularly right. From the mid-fount of delight comes something bitter which lurks in the flowers of its margin. That is a saying over which you may ponder. Some of its corollaries are obvious enough. The chief beauty of a woman is a key to such things as are not wholly beautiful in her nature. She is yielding to you: may she not yield to others? She is high in spirit: may she not be a shrew and a scold? She is vivid and vivacious: may she not be a virago? Remember, Silvester, I do not make these remarks in reference to Louisa; I think her perfect: I have been half in love

with her myself, since she took to substituting nice little spiteful sermonettes of her own for my friend Arundel's marvellous metaphysical sermons. Yes: I like Louisa. But when she is Mistress Silchester, you will discover she has lots of faults."

"I don't think so, father," said the youngster.

"Of course not. I should be sorry if you did. Fathers may lecture, but experience only can teach. *In ipsis floribus angat.* A woman's beauties become her defects. Now, tell me what you consider the most prominent point in Louisa Saint Osyth's character."

Silvester pondered. He had not begun an analysis of his lady-love. It was rather early for such scientific procedure, but he remembered their conversation in the Butts.

"The only thing I recollect in our final talk," said Silvester, "was about the words *love, honour, obey.* She said she would love and honour me, but that I must obey her."

The Squire laughed a mighty laugh.

"I know Miss Louisa," he said. "She wants to be mistress. She wants to be obeyed. Would you like to cure her of that little absurdity?"

"I should, certainly," quoth Silvester, not quite certain that his father was not laughing at him.

"It is easy enough," said the Squire. "*Obey her.* Let her in all things have her own way. Very soon will she discover that she has not strength enough to carry the responsibility. It is always best to let them find these things out for themselves. A man may be his own master, but a woman wants a personal master. They like to obey; they like to disobey. Those are the two luxuries which women demand in order to be happy."

Silvester was for some time thoughtful and silent. At length he said:

"Then you advise me to give in to Louisa on this point?"

“Most assuredly, my dear boy. She is a wise little girl, notwithstanding her fancies, and she will soon find out the mistake she has made. Tell her she shall be mistress—make yourself her slave. Do everything of any kind she tells you. In a very few days—certainly less than a week—she will find out the trouble she has taken upon herself, and will ask you to resume mastery. Then you can punish her.”

“How?” asked Silvester.

“I leave you to find a way,” replied his father. “You know how I punish naughty children. As you are going to set up for yourself, and become paterfamilias, I must leave you to take your own method.”

“I am a little afraid of Louisa,” said Silvester.

“And I have no doubt Louisa is a little afraid of you.”

A day or two later, as the Squire was lounging through the village, having gone down to see what was the state of affairs—which he always liked to know—he came sud-

denly across Miss Louisa herself, who blushed and nodded, and was going on. The place of meeting was a meadow path. The Squire, humorous always, said,

“Come here, child. Are you afraid of your father-in-law?”

Louisa, a clever girl, who instantly caught the tone of her interlocutor, curtseyed demurely, and stood still.

“Do you know your catechism, child?” asked the Squire.

“Yes, sir,” with a curtsey, as if she had been half her actual age.

“Why were you born?”

“To fall in love.” Another curtsey.

“What is your greatest virtue?”

“Loving Silvester.”

“What is your worst fault?”

“Loving Silvester.”

“What is your name?”

“Louisa Silchester.” There was a comic curtsey each time.

"You are a very nice little girl," said the Squire, and kissed her on the forehead. "You and Silvester can marry whenever you like. Are you in a hurry?"

"Not at all," she said. "But I shall be glad to have a father as well as a husband. You *will* be my father, won't you, Mr. Silchester?"

"Yes, Louisa, if you call me *father*. I want my boy to be happy, and I think that in making him so you can obtain happiness for yourself. You mean to make him *obey*, he tells me."

Louisa blushed, but was silent.

"Herakles obeyed Omphale," said the Squire. "He did it for fear. No matter. Make Silvester obey. I have no doubt he will be a very good boy."

"You are laughing at me," said Louisa. "It is a shame to be ironical with a poor little girl like me, who is only trying to be a little wiser than other girls, and to love more wisely."

Silvester—I mean Mr. Silchester—is much better and wiser than I am; but men do such rash things without consulting their wives, and I have always thought that brings on much of the trouble of the world."

"I suspect, my child," said the Squire gravely, "that the trouble of the world began when man and woman were created. But you, I can see, are rather impressed by the doctrines of Miss Alethea Fretful, who is in chronic mutiny against the position of women."

"She is a very able thinker," said Louisa, "and I correspond with her."

"You have read *Gulliver's Travels*, of course?" said the Squire, interrogatively abrupt.

"Yes," she said, "aren't they very childish?"

"Too deep for you, Louisa, without some instruction. But we won't argue now. You are my daughter from to-day. Come up to Silchester this afternoon, and stay to dinner if

your uncle doesn't want you, and bring him if he will come . . . which he will if you coax him and tell him all about it. Remember, you have a mother as well as a father, now."

Louisa, looking at the Squire as he stood at this moment under a great oak tree—owner, she knew, of a great estate stretching for miles every way, yet willing at once to give his son to the girl he loved—could not help admiring the noble simplicity of the man. This girl had read and thought; had read novels and pseudo-philosophy and pseudo-politics and pseudo-theology and a myriad other things which attract an active female intellect; and from these studies she had gathered many false impressions which her own unusual clearness of sight had in a great degree corrected. Still prejudices remained. She retained some few of the follies of the girl who has been taught that Church and State are a mistake, that our ancestors were apes, that women ought to be independent of men, and that the modern

prophetess is, not, Joanna Southcote, but Alethea Fretful.

But when she saw the Squire, a mighty Englishman of heroic mould, lean against an oak which one of his fathers had planted, and smile pleasantly on her amid the summer sunshine, and treat her as a daughter without cavil or comment, she could not help recognizing his nobleness and her own silliness.

CHAPTER XI.

WALTER NUGENT.

“Equal at toil and peril, romp and revel :
Had he feared God, he might have feared the Devil.”

WATTY NUGENT, as his uncle liked to call him, was fearless and fearsome. To some extent he resembled the panther Cleopatra, gift of Hathor the Nubian; being most attractive and charming to a new acquaintance, yet suddenly developing a frightening faculty—showing his teeth, and growling—in a way that amazed weak minds, especially female minds. It is questionable whether there was perfect truth in 'the story he told his uncle of his reason for leaving England. It is doubtful whether he was at all afraid of Musical

Willie's rivalry with Jessy Blair of Elgin. It is doubtful indeed whether he and Jessie had not achieved an intimacy which rendered marriage a mere work of supererogation. Such notions entered not the brain of Willie Nairn, who received the truant as if he had been his own son, and made him at home, and introduced him to his good friends at Silchester, as we have seen. Everybody of the small circle welcomed him. The Squire and his son and daughter liked this new Odysseus; so likewise did Louisa. He found himself in capital quarters. At his uncle's, at Silchester, at Silchester Rectory, he was equally at home. After roughing it all over the world, imagine how pleasant a life for the wanderer. Odysseus himself having slain the suitors in Ithaca, and pottering about the island with his dear old father Laertes, could hardly have felt happier.

Watty was the most plausible of men, but Donald disliked him. Your Highlander has a

touch of the dog in him, and judges by instinct. Donald, who had the true courtesy of a well-born servitor, could hardly bring himself to be civil to Mr. Nugent. He did not know why. But God gives us these flashes of feeling—we don't know why. Donald felt alongside Nugent as Donald's Scottish colley would have felt alongside Nugent's panther. Your panther is a cat, intolerable to a dog. There are cats and dogs among men and women.

As to Walter Nugent himself, he quite valued his niche. He was all things to all men. He enjoyed Musical Willie's cheery songs, prompted by whisky toddy. He quite revered the Squire, and deemed his library the noblest in the world, and his ideas the most original. He listened to the Doctor's racy talk, and intelligently responded, and quoted Arbuthnot. He enjoyed Silvester's verse, and tried to cap it with some of his own, and admitted failure. He sat devoutly attentive in Silchester Church while the Rev. Arundel

Saint Osyth preached those sermonettes which were already becoming famous throughout Devonshire. He talked wisdom to Louisa. He talked folly to Silvia.

“‘Extremes meet,’ the Poet said :
‘Darkness and light are one, are one ;
For the sense which gives us azure air,
Roses beautiful, maidens fair,
Lives in the Eye, and not in the Sun !’

‘Extremes meet,’ the Poet said :
‘Pleasure and pain are one, are one ;
For the sword which a stalwart soldier slew,
And a matchless maiden’s morning dew,
Are of selfsame worth when the world is done.’

‘Extremes meet,’ the Poet said :
‘Sorrow and mirth are one, are one ;
We shed for a lost friend useless tears,
We laugh that his brave soul had no fears
When he met his God, and all was done.’

‘Extremes meet,’ the Poet said :
‘Wisdom and folly are one, are one ;
If girls are fools when boys are wise,
Then boys are fools when girls have eyes ;—
Prithee, how was the world begun ?’”

This is one of Silvester Silchester’s latest

lucubrations. Let us respectfully hope the critical reader may deem it worthy that crack-brained young gentleman. Mr. Nugent praised it mightily, discovering hidden meanings which had not occurred to the rhymester himself. If you want thoroughly to flatter a man, prove him to be profounder than he thinks himself. Such was Nugent's way with our poetic Silvester, and it succeeded. Silvester Silchester thought Watty the best and cleverest fellow in the world. Watty—who knew everything—knew shorthand, and used to take down on his tablets the young Squire's poetic ejaculations as he faced the shore of the sounding sea. Was not this enough to win the heart of a poet?

Nugent won all the hearts in the vicinage, two excepted. He conquered the Squire, the Rector, the ladies, the Silchester shop-folk, the Mount St. Nicholas fishing-folk. But the Doctor, who had seen the world, felt an unpleasant taste on his mental palate after a

talk with Nugent; while the giant Highlander would hardly be civil to his master's nephew, and used to spit after speaking to him, as if to get rid of the flavour of the words. These, however, were the only persons who derogated from Watty's prodigious popularity, which was so great, that if Silchester had returned a member to Parliament, and its patron had not objected, he would have been the man.

Down on the shore, among the tar-flavoured lobster-catchers of Mount St. Nicholas, he was quite at home. He went out to sea in their trawlers, ate pilchard pie in their caddorous cottages, tipped their hard-handed boys and kissed their blowzy girls. Take him to the Squire's library, and he is eager for a lecture on the famous classic writers whose works he had never been fortunate to understand, or to hear some of those original ideas on matters social and political for which Mr. Silchester was so famous. At the Rectory he generally had some theological doubt to re-

solve, or some question of ecclesiastical history, which of course, Mr. Saint Osyth cleared up for him in a masterly manner. Watty was "exercised" about the Athanasian Creed. Was it genuine? was it authentic?

THE RECTOR.—There can be no doubt of it. The heresy of Arius arose at Alexandria—hotbed of heresies—in the time of Pope Silvester I. Then was held the great Council of Nicæa, in Bithynia, where three hundred and eighteen bishops were present, of whom seventeen only were of the Arian belief. This was the time, as you doubtless remember, when the pious Empress Helena discovered the cross at Jerusalem, after many failures. A church was built where it was found: and the great Emperor Constantine, receiving from his pious mother three nails of the cross, wore one in his helmet, had another forged into a bit for his war-horse, and threw the third, amid great solemnities, into the Adriatic, to appease its tempests. But I am digressing sadly.

NUGENT.—I like to hear you digress, sir. A wild and wandering life has kept me out of the reach of such remarkable knowledge as you possess.

THE RECTOR.—You have learnt other things, which I could not learn in my study. You have learnt the cities and the ways of men. But to resume. The conflict between the Arians and the orthodox lasted through the times of Pope Silvester and Marcus I.; but in the days of Julius I. a council was held at Laodicea, where Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, met Arius face to face, thoroughly refuting him. Then Arius accused Athanasius of sorcery, declaring that he conjured by help of the dead arm of one Arsenius, whom he had killed. The Emperor Constantine was on the side of Arius and so persecuted Athanasius that he lay concealed for six years in a dry cistern, without seeing the sun. But in time he was restored, and the heretic Arius met with a dreadful death.

NUGENT.—After this explanation I cannot doubt that you are right, Mr. Saint Osyth. But really these are days in which the foundations of everything are shaken: it is hard to say what is true or what false, especially for a man who has been away from England for years, with no opportunities of obtaining information or instruction.

Need it be said that the Rev. Arundel Saint Osyth fully approved Mr. Walter Nugent?

Walter Nugent's character was not unusual; he had no remorse of conscience, no ayenbite of inwy. He was a great lover of beauty, of pleasure, of all things voluptuous. When he came into the Silchester circle, one of his earliest deeds was to fall in love—as he chose to call it. He fell in love with Silvia Silchester—a sumptuous young creature with fair hair, dog-violet eyes, a straight Greek nose, and much magnificence of curve about her. He fell in love with Louisa Saint Osyth—brown-haired, brown-eyed, the nose *retroussé* like that of La

Fontaine's Princess, the form lissom and agile. Both girls were pretty; both girls were wealthy; but they were as different from each other as imaginable—whence they were fast friends. Silvia and Louisa were about the same height, tall girls; to see them tripping down Silchester village street was a pleasant thing. Louisa always looked taller than her friend, being of slighter build.

Walter Nugent, idiot that he was, had an amorous feeling towards both these young ladies. He could not decide which he liked best. He wished bigamy were permissible in England. That not being the case, he would like to have one for wife and the other for mistress. Thus did Musical Willie's nephew meditate as he sat silently by his uncle's fireside, sipping whisky punch. If our dear friend Dactyl & Spondee had known what was passing through his kinsman's brain, he would have brained him there and then.

Neither of the young ladies had the least

notion that Watty admired her. They were very good friends, and used often to walk together; but they had no exact intellectual common measure. Mathematics has more to do with life than we think; and many of the apparently most irreconcileable people are reconciled because they have a common measure. It may be a very small one, but it just does the business.

Let us follow Louisa and Silvia to the Well Head, where they went for a walk, having first filled their pockets with macaroons and ratafias from Dyer's. The pure water of the Well Head was quite intoxicating enough for two little girls.

LOUISA.—How lovely it is here! Look at those exquisite ferns, Sylvia! I have not seen much of the world, but few corners of it could be lovelier than this.

SILVIA.—I have never wished to see much of the world. Papa has shown me that you cannot explore even what there is in your

own garden, your own village. I often say there are strange people in this village; he replies that there are people at least as strange in every village on the surface of the world. And after hearing some of his experiences, I believe him right.

LOUISA.—What do you think of the newcomer with the panther?

SILVIA.—Well, what do *you*? You are older than I, and ought to make up your mind sooner.

LOUISA.—You ingenuous ingenious child! Do you really want to know what I think of him? You know he's a handsome clever fellow, with heaps of money. Let us each write down on a piece of paper what we think of him, and exchange papers.

SILVIA.—My dear Louisa, I can't write.

LOUISA.—Goodness! I had forgotten. Never mind, I think we can manage. Old Applegate, the miller, has a little girl that goes to Sunday-school. You run down and make her write

what you want written. I'll put mine in big letters on my tablets. Bring the imp back with you, and we'll make her spell out both.

Little Polly Applegate was easily found. She wrote down Silvia's opinion, and then came up with her to the Well Head. Louisa's judgment was ready.

Thus they both ran :—

LOUISA.—“A humbug, rather.”

SILVIA.—“A humbug—and worse.”

Odd that the same word, as applicable to Mr. Walter Nugent, should have occurred to both girls. What would they have said if they had known he was in love with both of them—or thought he was?

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT HE SAID TO SILVIA.

“I have strange powers of speech.”

AS he lay in his crib at the old Manor House of Mount St. Nicholas, smoking a meerschaum with a long ebony stem, and occasionally dipping into a scrofulous French novel, Walter Nugent had many sordid soliloquies on the comparative value of the two young ladies who were thrown in his path. So great a belief in himself had Nugent, that he quite thought it was a mere question of ask and have with both Louisa and Silvia. To which should he throw his handkerchief? That was the difficulty with this young Caliph, who had

hitherto been successful in everything, and who felt certain of success in love.

He pondered much. He argued the matter with himself most logically. Louisa was an heiress in her own right; but then Silvia would be richer eventually, and her father was a great landowner, and her brother was an easy sort of fool. Silvia was blonde: he preferred brunettes, and Louisa was a perfect example. Really things were too evenly balanced. He would toss up. Heads, Louisa; tails, Silvia. Silvia won. Nugent turned on his side and fell asleep, with that beautiful promptitude which is commanded by men whose consciences are undisturbed.

When he awoke next morning, it was to immediate recollection of his vesper thoughts. Walter Nugent had the faculty of falling asleep easily; he had also the cognate faculty of awaking in the morning free from any mental or physical ailment. Too much alcohol gave him no headache; too much perplexity gave him no worry.

He thoroughly exemplified that aphorism attributed to Talleyrand, that the two secrets of happiness were a strong stomach and a hard heart. As he opened his eyes at about six o'clock he could see through his bedroom window the Atlantic waves calmly moving beneath the summer sun ; without rising he could watch the restless ocean, here and there a sail, here and there a sea-mew stooping to look for fish. He enjoyed the glorious vision in his own way : not the beauty of it delighted him, but the sense of freedom, the suggestion of adventure. It seemed for a moment to put an end to his previous plans. Why should he stay there and make love to little girls when his yacht was ready, and the great highways of the sea were open to him ? That tremulous tide was his old friend : hither and thither he had roved upon it till it seemed to him he knew it as a born Cockney knew London streets. His yacht had entered virgin creeks, had coasted un-trodden islets. Fearless and resourceful,



Walter Nugent went whither he would, and had many an adventure too wild to be recounted here. As he lay gazing on the sea, the thirst for his old life came upon him, and he was on the point of going down to his boat without a word even to his uncle, and making sail in search of wild peril, and pleasure wilder.

He lighted his pipe. The sedative calmed him. He thought of the two beautiful girls whom he had just met. He fell into a lazy nicotine dream. It struck him that he might carry away one of them in his yacht if he chose, and take her to the end of the world. He thought of islands in Greek seas that he remembered, where it would be Elysium to live with a woman till you tired of her. What then? Walter Nugent was ready with an answer to the question . . . Leave her to chance, or sell her as a slave.

Having consumed a pipe of honeydew over these philosophic and humane reflections, Mr.

Nugent took his bath and dressed. He was always early. Long sea-travel had accustomed him to awaking at sunrise: so, while Musical Willie, who loved drowsy mornings in

“A chamber deaf to noise and blind to light,”

was enjoying his lazy luxury, his nephew would often be miles away, on sea or land.

This morning he walked up to Silchester village. It was only half awake. Labourers had begun to work in the fields: here and there a drowsy servant-girl was kneeling down with ungartered stockings to clean a doorstep. There was occasional fragrance of bacon rashers, but shop-shutters were as yet unclosed, and the only people who were moving about were little boys and girls with milk-cans. Nugent loitered down the street and smoked his long pipe, causing much admiration among the servant-maidens and milk-varlets. He passed through the sleepy market-place, and out to the other side of the village, where a

great meadow called the Hundred Acres broke up the line of Squire Silchester's woods. In this meadow famous mushrooms grew, and Mr. Nugent was fond of that fungus. He thought he might as well have some for breakfast, and delectate Musical Willie therewith.

The great meadow was triangular, and on a slope, the upper angle trenching on the woodland. As Nugent crossed the stile, he became aware of a female figure at that upper angle. It seemed familiar: a tall lithe girl, with petticoats kilted up to avoid the dew, and a basket in hand.

“Silvia herself, by Jove!” thought Nugent.
“She’ll have picked all the mushrooms.”

He sat on the stile and smoked, leisurely observing her as she zigzagged down the sunny slope, seeking her spoil. She looked, in her succinct garb, something like Milton’s “stripling cherub,” all but the wings. She had thrown a red shawl over her shoulders. That shawl caused an incident.

The Squire was a great breeder of short-horns. His favourite bull, Roan Tom, with a herd of cows, had been turned into the Hundred Acres. Roan Tom was lazily rubbing his adamantine forehead against a big elm in the corner of the field, when unconscious Miss Silvia came tripping down the slope with a basket brimful of snowy mushrooms, and a scarf of scarlet on her shoulders. Roan Tom looked—sniffed—pawed the ground—bellowed.

Nugent, who had been watching the lady, and had not observed the cattle, saw at a glance what would happen. He threw down his pipe, felt in his pockets for what weapons might be there, (for he never went unarmed,) and then rushed rapidly towards Silvia.

The bull was charging also. Silvia saw her danger.

“ Throw down your shawl and run away,” cried Nugent at his loudest.

Silvia luckily heard and obeyed. The bull

rushed to where the speck of scarlet lay on the green, sniffed it, and turned. The diversion gave Nugent time to get near him. Roan Tom rushed straight at him. Nugent dodged him, and, with athletic alacrity, caught him by the tail. The bull galloped fiercely away. Nugent, holding on like a vice on a piece of metal, got from his pocket a life-preserved, wherewith he pummelled the poor bull mercilessly on his hind-quarters. It was a sharp tussle, but Roan Tom got tired first. His gallop grew languid; the heavy thuds of the loaded weapon on his flank were too much for him; and at last he pulled up and stood stupidly still. Nugent, breathless yet alert, let go his tail; and the bull turned his head and stared at him lazily. He was done for. Nugent gave him a push, and he fell languidly on his side.

Then he turned to look for Silvia. She had reached the stile. When he got there, he found her almost faint with fright. There was

a grassy bank close by, with much shelter of high-growing hawthorn: thither he took her, and loosened the upper part of her dress, and with much difficulty induced her to drink a drop or two from a small gold flask which he carried. It was right rosolio, and rapidly revived her. When she opened her lovely blue eyes, and found herself lying half on the grass and half in Walter Nugent's arms, she felt no fear.

“ You are very kind,” she said, “ and very brave. How *could* you master that bull so splendidly? It was wonderful. Papa will be so thankful to you. Really,” she continued, looking round at her basket, “ I have not lost many of my mushrooms.”

Then she grew faint again. Walter Nugent, who, whatever his faults, had the natural kindness which belongs to most men who “ go down to the sea in ships,” and which makes sailors almost as good nurses as women, did his uttermost to console and revive her. He

forgot his schemes at this moment. He treated her with as much kindness and delicacy as if she had been his sister or daughter. There was just a chance that this occurrence would have changed his fate. His genius hovered above the two, and strove to turn the current of Nugent's life. It was irreversible. How multitudinous are the regrets of men for what might have been !

The missing mushrooms were collected ; the scarlet scarf was picked up ; the bull was reconnoitred, to see that no harm had befallen him beyond tenderness of flank ; Silvia's bosom was blushfully buttoned ; and then the two took their way to Silchester. Walter Nugent chatted gaily, to efface Silvia's fear. He told her wondrous stories of travel. How should he fear a shorthorn bull, who had often ridden on the back of a crocodile ? Once a tiger had attacked him when he was unarmed, and he suddenly opened his umbrella, and the animal ran away. He had been chased when bathing

by a shoal of sharks, and had dived under them. He had been embraced by an immense gorilla, and had run his clasp-knife into its spine. He had been carried by a condor to its nest high in the Andes, and had killed the bird and its mate with his revolver, and brought two young condorets down the precipices to the city of Opodeldockamptulikonkorydalis, which is said to be the highest city in the world.

What had he not done? Silvia was delighted with her deliverer. The man who could conquer Roan Tom might well have done all the things he narrated. She believed him absolutely.

“Do come in with me,” she said, when they reached a lodge gate. “My father would like to thank you.”

“Ah, but I don’t want to be thanked. Besides, my uncle would wonder what has happened if I am not with him at breakfast. If you want to reward me very much, give me half your mushrooms.”

“ What a reward ! ” said she. Take what you will. I have more than we can possibly use. ”

He took some, and dropped them into his side pocket. Then he said :

“ So you don’t think that sufficient reward for my slight service ? ”

“ No indeed. What other can I give you ? ”

“ Try to love me.”

She blushed; looked archly at him; ran away.

CHAPTER XIII.

SILVIA SOLILOQUIZETH AND DREAMETH.

“Rubies unparagoned.”

IT is, I assume, improper for even a novelist to visit in her chamber a young lady whom he has created. This at least appears the verdict of critics in this modest and decorous time, when we have become so singularly virtuous that cakes and ale are quite out of fashion. So I really do not know what to do with Miss Silvia, who, on the day of matutine adventure mentioned in the last chapter, had no opportunity of thinking over her position till she was in the solitude of her chamber.

It chanced to be a busy day. The Squire

had organized an expedition. Somebody had opened a tumulus on an outlying part of his estate, and some coins and fibulæ and urns had been found; and his archæologic instinct was excited. So he determined to drive over in his mail-phaeton and pair; and as Mrs. Silchester was disinclined to go, and Sylvester had previously arranged a day's fishing with Musical Willie and his nephew, the Squire was compelled to content himself with his daughter's company. She was a pleasant companion, even to her father—which is not true of all daughters. She chatted pleasantly as they drove away inland to a high bit of moor where the discovery had been made. She tried to wholly forget the adventure and misadventure of the morning, though she felt in her conscience the right thing to do was to tell her father all about it. Ah, but how difficult it is to begin a confession, even to the kindest father confessor, and when you have not to confess any sin of your own !

So the Squire and Silvia had their drive together without mention on her part of the morning's occurrence, though excellent opportunity was afforded when her father praised her for gathering mushrooms for his breakfast. As Matthew Arnold says,

“ We mortal millions live alone;”

and your daughter, sitting by your side in a mail-phaeton, with nothing between you and her but a little broadcloth and sealskin and silk and linen, may be mentally a myriad leagues away from you—farther than from Aldebaran to Sirius. Indeed it is possible that this may happen with your wife, where the material fence or partition is much slighter. This is a world in which hypocrisy and falsehood are singularly well protected. Asmodeus unroofed for the student Cleofas the houses of Madrid—and the result was remarkable. What would it be if some friendly fiend could make transparent the skulls of all one's

acquaintance, and show the ideas at work therein?

Silvia had a pleasant day on the moorland with her father. The groom had in charge some refreshment (sandwich and sparkle) which slightly moistened the Dryasdust disquisitions produced by Roman pottery and coins. The day was sunny, the moor fresh, the horses fresher, the general state of affairs exhilarant. Silvia was happy. Silvia would have been happier if she had not been troubled by erotic proposals from Walter Nugent that morning. Silvia would also have been happier if she could have gathered courage enough to tell her father. She could not; and thereby arose unpleasant complications. Girls should tell their fathers all their troubles; boys may go to their mothers.

The day passed. Silvia went to bed. She said her prayers, kneeling in her night-dress. Then she lay down and thought over her matutine adventure. It puzzled and worried

her. She was a mere child, remember, and Walter Nugent was a man who had seen the world. There were times when Silvia thought she rather liked Walter Nugent. There were times when she thought the very reverse.

“Oh,” she thought, “if I only knew how to tell whether a man was true—how to tell whether his brilliant bravery had any kin at all with knavery—how to find his measure of mind beneath the handsome corporeal rind! I could love if only, only, only, I were sure that I should not be left all lonely by a man who deemed himself wholly free to do as he pleased and to laugh at me. I am ready to love to my uttermost breath, and to give my love to the verge of death. But he whom I love must be true, or I shall leave him alone in his filth—and die. Better any death than to bear the curse of a scoundrel husband. It were not worse to be a slave without chance of egress—a frightfully flogged and scarified negress.

“But I'm no negress, neither am I anxious

from maidenhood to fly ; and I don't see why a man should prevail because he caught a bull by the tail. He was very prompt, and did not falter ; still I'm not in love with Master Walter. His question of love I think may keep—and I think—I think—I'll tumble asleep."

Which she did, stretching her pretty arms above the coverlet by way of preparation for delicious dreams. What did she dream ?

The writer who could chronicle a girl's dreams must have no pedestrian pen. Dreams ! They are ravishing, enchanting, absolute. They are the essence of the unknown world. They are what would be if girls could create a world for themselves,—a world in which all men should be heroes, and all madly in love with the lovely little dreamer. The male reader has had his dreams, doubtless,—visions like those of Southeby at Cintra, or De Quincey amid the lakes. Indeed, not to have dreamt is a sign of imagination stagnant ; while to dream wisely and poetically is perhaps a greater in-

dication of spiritual power than to think wisely and poetically. Consider the question. An aphorism attributed to George III. says that "six hours in bed are enough for a man, seven for a woman, eight for a fool." Most of us probably are fools. This writer's average is from 2 a.m. to 8 a.m. But there are winter mornings too severely iced for early rising ; and on such mornings how pleasant it is to lie abed and dream poetic dreams ! Take it that the average sleeper spends only eight hours in bed. Those eight hours, a third of the great diurnal round, are all his own. During the other sixteen he has to work, to read and write, to eat and drink,—to go through many processes that deprive one of independence. He must live. Take him to be proprietor of a great estate—it has to be managed ; or head-master of a grammar-school—the boys have to be whipped into their Homer and Virgil ; or day-labourer at a farm—he must work for his beans and bacon. The man has yet to be discovered for

whom the day is absolutely free. It brings its unescapable requisitions. It involves work. It involves responsibility.

Neither of these exist amid the happy hours of sleep.' You have nothing to do—except to dream, or not to dream. The great question for the philosophic dreamer is how to avoid two things : (1) nightmare ; (2) the discontinuous dream. A dream, to be enjoyable, ought to be a poem pleasant and perfect. Hateful is the dream in which you fancy you cannot get on a pair of boots, or in which some unsatisfactory animal (a gryphon or wyvern or rhinoceros) settles itself on your chest. Even more hateful is the discontinuous unsignificant dream, wherein often are mingled all the unpleasant and hideous people you remember or have forgotten, in combinations which defy both Laplace and the kaleidoscope. It seems a pity we can get no science of oneirology—no method whereby sleep might be made the happiest time of life, which it manifestly ought to be. It is the only

time when you have not to sacrifice to vanity in the matter of hats and coats or of gowns and bonnets. It is the only time when you are beyond criticism—when you are monarch of all you survey, as Cowper puts it. The bed is a solitary island, and you are Robinson Crusoe for a third of your life. Sleep separates you from trouble as securely as the untraversed sea. Your servitude or misery, your ambition or avarice, depart when you tread the pathless paradise of Sleep. If you recall those stark spectres, the fault is yours. There *are* men who will persist in dreaming of their creditors—but it is a mistake.

So little Silvia dreamt unsophistically. She had not been taught how to dream. It is an art not as yet compassed by ladies' seminaries, so far as there is information on the topic. At any rate, it seems not to be named in their prospectuses. Notwithstanding this, your little girl will dream, especially after anything that seems like an event to her giddy little head.

So Silvia dreamt, that night.

She dreamt that she was pursued by a bull with a countenance exactly like that of Walter Nugent. How ungrateful to her heroic deliverer!

She dreamt, further,—only her dream was broken into a series of nightmares,—that the Nugent bull, just as it was about to toss her over a familiar tall green hedge of hawthorn that she saw every day, was seized on the shoulder by an immense dog, that pulled it to the ground. The mighty mastiff had also a human face, but one entirely unknown to her. The bull ran away, and the mastiff roared a mighty bark, and Silvia awoke, pleased to find that she was not in the paddock, but between the sheets,—far, far, far away from both bulls and mastiffs.

“I do hate dreams,” she said next day to the Squire.

“That is because you don’t dream scientifically, child,” said Mr. Silchester.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RIVALS.

“ He who can form a magic square
May find employment anywhere ;
But he who knows the magic cycle
May blow the bugle of St. Michael ;
Till heaven and earth are rent asunder,
He holds the keys of joy and wonder.”

“ **A**RE you a Rosicrucian ? ” asked Walter Nugent of Sylvester Silchester one fine spring eventide. The western sky was full of ideas. You could see amber skiffs in it, ruby seraphs, golden goddesses, gray poets of the past. The south wind was making holiday, and playing wild freaks with the clouds. It was a regular romp among the sky’s minor deities. The Moon, a thin scimitar, looked on so keen

and thin that you felt to touch her would cut your finger. No earthly cutler could have set such a blade. It must have been Völund Smith, the famous artificer whose swords would cut men through without their knowing it till they shook themselves. Then they dissolved partnership. Such smiths are not nowaday. Völund was Vulcan to the great King and sublime Architect who built the imperishable Palace of Stonehenge. Some day, some archæologic Antrobus will dig up that very gold chain which Völund wove for his queen,—so fine that a mile of it could lie in the corner of Her Majesty's eye without her discovering it. Such chains are wholly beyond the skill of the neoteric orfèvre who sells you so few links (and so ugly) for so much money. Völund is said to have made out of a coin the size of a spade guinea a chain that reached from Old Sarum to Camelot. But then the question is, Where was Camelot? According to the best authorities, it was either Carlisle in Cumberland, or Camel-

ford in Cornwall. In either case, the story seems scarcely credible, unless Völund the smith could weave gold into gossamer. Per-adventure he could. There are two or three poets who can.

“A Rosicrucian!” replied Silvester. “What is a Rosicrucian? I am quite without news of those gentry. Are they Jacobins or Jacobites, Freemasons or Knights Templars? I am in ignorance, my dear Nugent: inform me.”

“You must have read of them surely,” said Nugent, “in the writings of Lord Lytton.”

“I never read a line of Lord Lytton’s in my life,” said Silvester.

“You surprise me,” said Nugent. “He is one of the greatest writers of the time.”

“I agree with you, not having read him,” said Silvester, reticently. “But how about these Rosicrucians? Are *you* a Rosicrucian?”

“Well, rather more than less, I think. You can have no idea what marvellous adventures

I have undergone, and what strange people I have encountered. One day, in Amsterdam, I went into Focking's shop to get some dry curaçao. I dropped a coin. A withered old gentleman, tall and thin, a mixture of Mephistopheles with Asmodeus, picked it up and handed it to me. I made some kind of courteous acknowledgment. We walked to the shop door together. He took out a gold snuff-box, blazing with brilliants, hard to beat even in Amsterdam, and offered a pinch of snuff. Of course I could not refuse, and of course I could not help sneezing. He drew me into conversation. He asked me the very question I have asked you. I replied in your own words : What *is* a Rosicrucian ? ”

“ I hope you got a satisfactory answer,” said Silvester. “ I should rather like to know.”

“ Not at first . . . not indeed till I had met him three or four times, sometimes at his own house, sometimes at my hotel. I could not for

a long time decide whether to call him an impostor or a lunatic. I at last found he was neither."

"But I suppose he had nothing scientific to teach you?"

"Not in the modern sense of science. He amused me at first by whimsical experiments. He burnt a rosebud to ashes on a watch-glass, over the flame of a spirit-lamp. He dropped the ashes into a crystalline vase of water, and poured in some ruby fluid, and suddenly the rose reappeared, blooming on its stem."

"Sleight of hand," said Silvester.

"So at once I thought, and thought the same of other pretty tricks he played. However, suspending my opinion of him, and feeling, in my youthful conceit, that if impostor he could not swindle, or if lunatic strangle me, I listened to him with profound gravity. He lectured on the Rosicrucians, whose founder was one Christian Rosenkreuz, some five centuries ago. He made two discoveries—how to

transmute any metal into gold, and how to live until you are tired of living."

"They complement each other well enough," said Silvester. "If one wanted to live any length of time on this planet, plenty of gold would be requisite to keep matters straight. The Rosicrucians are a sensible sect."

"They have yet another power," said Nugent. "If they have once grasped a person's hand in a peculiar way, they can bring that person by some magnetic attraction from any distance at any time."

"Uncommonly unpleasant for the person," says Silvester with a laugh; "I hope I shan't be pulled out of bed in the short hours, after a hard day's hunting, by one of these Rosicrucians. But of course you found the old gentleman was cracked—or half-cracked, with a touch of the humbugous."

"Your theory has been mine all through, especially as he told me he was born in the year 1365, and had not yet decided when he

should die. But I was rather puzzled when he took a slip of lead, poured on it some colourless fluid, and it became gold, as I found next day by assay."

"Sleight of hand again," said Silvester.

"So I thought. So I still think, I think. Yet another thing was even more curious. I am an early riser—always have been. In those days I was searching for adventure; and one morning I saw a very pretty girl, evidently not a Dutch damsel, enter a house just as I left my hotel. There was something in her contour and movement which made me think her Parisian. I walked slowly down the street, and saw her draw down a blind in an upper window. There was no mistaking the movement of her hand. It was one of those delicate and fluent gestures which belong only to loveable women. I met her a morning or two afterwards, by deliberate accident. She was nursing a sick relation through the night, and slept most of the day. We became friendly

without being in love. Wishing to try a Rosicrucian experiment, I held her hand in the grip of the fraternity. Then, one midnight, when I was with my ancient friend, I silently wished that she should come to me at his house. Within five minutes the door bell rang, and she was shown into the room where we were sitting."

"His accomplice," said Silvester.

"How possible?" replied Nugent.

"I have heard the story of Schiller's *Ghost Seer*. Read it, and see what you think of it. In this case you had unconsciously betrayed to your friend the Rosicrucian that you were going to try your experiment. In fact, he had laid a trap for you."

"With what object? What could he gain by deluding me?"

"My dear fellow, when we begin by deluding ourselves, we like also to delude other people. So the man who torments himself will torment others; and the man who instructs himself

will instruct others ; and the man who amuses himself will amuse others.”

“ You are philosophical and aphoristic,” replied Nugent, stroking his beard and emitting a mighty puff of smoke that tried to rival the clouds of sunset. “ But it seems to me that a man like that, who had nothing to gain by deluding a mere boy, as I was then, would not waste his time on such an employment.”

Silvester paused some time before he replied. Then he said :

“ Your experience of men (not to mention women) is far longer and wiser than mine. Yet I almost venture to think you have not observed the tendency which induces people perfectly sane and often very clever to do the maddest things. Your Amsterdam friend had persuaded himself there was something in the Rosicrucian mystery, and did his best to persuade others. Look at the Freemasons, a set of gentlemen who dine together, and are charitable to their poor companions, and who

have not the remotest idea of the craft and history of the freemasons who built our minsters, and whose name they have stolen. They positively persuade themselves and the world that they have a secret—and the secret is that there is no secret. People of this sort are interesting as psychological specimens, but I should not care to dine with them.”

“So you think my Rosicrucian was a humbug,” said Walter Nugent, a trifle out of temper, and puffing furiously at his pipe.

“He was an uncommonly clever humbug if he took *you* in,” said Silvester quietly. “But I must be off now, old fellow. I’ve a lot of things to do before dinner. Good-bye.

“Good-bye,” said Nugent lazily, and strolled away toward Mount St. Nicholas. Silvester went up toward the house. It was nearly dinner-time, and there was just a chance, he had heard, of the parson and his niece coming to dinner. How it increaseth a young man’s appetite when he expects a pretty girl

to sit opposite or by his side ! Which is the better ?

Meanwhile there passed through Silvester's mind doubts as to whether Walter Nugent was quite trustworthy. Silvester, truthful himself, accepted as truth what any one told him ; but in Nugent's stories there was almost too strong a touch of romance.

“ I don't know what to make of that fellow , ” he soliloquized, strolling slowly homeward, with eyes that unconsciously drunk the sunset.

“ Does he lie deliberately and for mere fun, or does he delude himself into believing that his impossibilities have happened, or has he been utterly hoaxed by somebody ? I shall ask my father to-night or to-morrow.

“ Not to-night though, by Aphrodite. Louisa is to be here. I mean to make love tremendously. Little Louisa has but one fault ; she thinks herself older than I am. She isn't : for I've lived at least half a century since I saw her . ”

Love's logic.

CHAPTER XV.

A DISAPPOINTMENT.

“‘Off ! off !’ said the stranger ;
 Off ! off ! and away !’
And away flew the light bark
 Over the silvery bay.”

SILVESTER was doomed to disappointment that evening. The parson came to dinner without Louisa. He explained, rather incoherently, that she had—probably—some duty which prevented her coming. Silvia smiled mischievously to see her brother’s countenance elongate. But they all went to dinner, and a capital dinner they had. You don’t get moor mutton with hot laver sauce every day. The author is inhibited by publishers and

critics from aristological observations, or he would here describe a good Devonshire dinner.

Somewhat vaguely, not to say jesuitically, did the Reverend Arundel Saint Osyth account for his niece's absence—the fact being that he could not account for it himself. When he started from the rectory, she had not come in. He was not surprised, for Miss Louisa was rather independent, and often came in an hour too late for dinner if the rheumatic pauperism of some old woman interested her. So the Rector felt justified in putting down her absence to some parochial incident, and enjoyed his *jaune dorée* with sauce of red mullets' livers stewed in port wine. He would not have had much appetite had he known what was happening.

It was not a particularly amusing dinner party. The Squire and his wife were as pleasant as usual, but the Rector missed his niece, and Silvester missed his sweetheart, and

Silvia could not help thinking about Walter Nugent. When a little girl gets into her ticklish condition, dinner becomes an unmeaning ceremony, champagne has no taste on the palate. Of course the palate is almost as undeveloped as the brain in children of Silvia's age. Still they *do* like, when "in maiden meditation, fancy free," like an elderly lady whom Shakespeare deigned to flatter, the saccharine effervescence, the lymph of the lollilop. But let them be in love, or think they are in love, and the flavour goes out of everything. Doubtless it is a law of nature, and therefore wise. Still, little girls are a great nuisance at this stage, and might well be relegated to the nursery. The old lady who kept a school at Brighton, and cured love-fits by rhubarb pills and salts and senna, was wise in her generation. It hath been written :

"Love is like a dizziness ;
Won't let a poor man go about his business."

A version for the girls might be:

“ Love is like a fever ;
Won’t let a little girl laugh at her deceiver.”

No, it was a dull dinner. The Squire, when he subsequently soliloquized, smoking his meerschaum alone in the book-room with a final glass of brandy and seltzer, decided something must be wrong. The Squire could see as well as most men through a mill-stone.

“ Why did not Louisa come? If she is in love with Silvester, it is very odd. Why didn’t the parson know why she didn’t come? Why was Silvia so silent and absent? That young minx shall tell me all about her troubles tomorrow.”

The Squire was the kindest of men, but he demanded from his children confidence and obedience, and knew how to obtain them.

As he sat in his book-room smoking, there came a loud ring at the hall door. He rang his own bell, it being a habit of his always to

have his body-servant within call. Ralph Linfitt came—the best of valets.

“Some one at the front door, Linfitt. Are you afraid to open it at this unholy hour?”

“Not a bit, your honour,” and off he went, and presently returned to usher in the parson, who looked as pale as a ghost, and could hardly speak as he sank into a chair.

“Brandy, Linfitt,” said the Squire promptly, “and make up the fire. What’s the matter, my dear friend?”

“My niece—Louisa—has gone away,” he replied in a hoarse whisper.

“Gone away!”

“She has not come home, and now it is past midnight, and she must either have gone away of her own accord, or something must have happened to her. I don’t know which would be worst.”

The poor parson cried like a child, but the Squire dosed him with brandy, and he grew better.

"You suspect nobody?" said the Squire presently.

"O dear, no. I always thought if she cared about anybody it was your son."

"She does," said Mr. Silchester; "and he cares for her. She is a year or two older than he is, but I don't think that matters. They will get on very well."

"You are very good," said the parson, "but all this time I am thinking I may never see the poor child again."

"Pshaw, my dear friend," quoth the Squire, the most sanguine man in Devon, a man who if doomed to be hanged would feel sure of a reprieve; "the little girl will be all right either to-night or to-morrow morning. She has gone off on some charitable expedition, and got benighted."

The Rector went home, consoled by wise counsel and strong brandy and water.

* * * *

Meanwhile, where was Louisa? She had

strolled down to the sea's margin to think of Silvester. She was in love, clearly. For being in love she quarrelled with herself. It was below her dignity. Was she not classical and algebraic, a writer of sermonettes for her uncle, and a correspondent of Miss Alethea Fretful? It was quite wrong. It was an abnegation of woman's rights. Yet, on the other hand, there was one Silvester Silchester, six feet high, able to leap his own height, able to walk fifty miles without being tired, able to make Greek or Latin or English verse faster than the most garrulous idiot could talk imbecile prose—could she refuse him? A trifle younger than she—yet was he in verity older and stronger. He was no boy. The girl acknowledged her master.

She was reflecting thus, when suddenly a step on the sands aroused her from her meditation, and she beheld Walter Nugent. She rather liked Mr. Nugent.

“How fortunate, Miss Saint Osyth!” he

exclaimed. "My sailing boat is just here. Won't you come out with me and look at the sunset on the sea? It is an exquisite afternoon."

"I should like it much," she replied, "but I fear it is late, and I have to dine at Silchester."

"Oh, you have plenty of time for a brief cruise," he said, looking at his watch; "I will be answerable for you. There is just wind enough to give us half an hour's brisk movement."

He helped her into the boat, and ran it down the steep sandy beach into the water. There was a merry breeze. Off they went, down-Channel at a rattling pace. By and by the sky grew grayer, and Louisa thought she should be late for dinner.

Walter Nugent laughed.

"Miss Saint Osyth," he said, not altogether amiably, "you will not dine at Silchester to-night; you will dine where I choose."

"What do you mean?" she exclaimed.

“ Mean simply that you are in my power, and I shall make you dine with me. Don’t be foolish ; do as I wish, and you will be happy enough.”

Louisa reflected, saying nothing. Was the man mad, or an unscrupulous scoundrel ? He had entrapped her, evidently. Simple-subtle, she decided on a behaviour which would suit either theory of his character. She would be courteous, yet coy. She would reserve strong measures till they became absolutely necessary. She had means of using strong measures which are not customary with young ladies. A fancy of hers was the saloon-pistol : by accident she had one of those pretty fatal toys in her pocket. She felt that she might have to use it.

All these reflections passed through Louisa’s mind far more rapidly than they could through the reader’s. She simply said :

“ Well, I hope you will give me a good dinner, and a comfortable room to dress in beforehand.”

This reply seemed slightly to perplex Mr. Nugent, who said something incoherent about her having all she could possibly wish. Presently he ran his yacht into the harbour of an islet, where some people were waiting for him. They were not pleasant-looking people. There were both men and women, who seemed of the lowest type of the Cornish race. Louisa, as gallant a girl as ever lived, resolved to show no sign of fear. Being in Nugent's power, she went with him to the house on the island, a square granite edifice. A Cornish girl, Mary Clymo, almost as square as the house, showed her to a room. She made an imperfect toilet, Miss Clymo being present. She came down to a dinner of the rougher sort. All the dinner-time she treated Walter Nugent as if he were a gentleman. Her superb coolness perfectly puzzled him.

After dinner had been finished, and coffee served, she said abruptly,

“I should like to go to my room, Mr. Nugent. Will you ring for my maid?”

Nugent rang the bell as obediently as if he had been Louisa's husband. Mary Clymo appeared—stout, shiny, florid. Miss Saint Osyth was shown to a different room from that wherein she had dressed for dinner. She looked at it with keen notice while Mary was helping her to undress, and came to the conclusion that there might be secret entries in connection with some of the curious old wood-work.

“Mary,” she said suddenly to the shaggy Cornish girl, “what do you think of your master?”

“Not so very much, Miss. He’s done a smart few wickednesses since he took this place, and I wants to go away, but feyther says I’m a fule.”

“You shall go away as soon as you please, Mary,” said Miss Saint Osyth, “if you will remain in my room to-night. Keep awake if you can, but if you cannot, it doesn’t much matter. I suppose if your master came into

thoroughly perplexed and distraught, could imagine nothing to do, and was only too glad of an adroit and efficient helper.

Alas! the newspapers and the police did no good whatever, and nothing could be heard of Louisa Saint Osyth.

* * * *

The excitement caused in the village of Silchester and its vicinity by the inexplicable disappearance of so charming a young lady as Louisa, is of course beyond description. Quite indescribable, as well may be imagined, was the state of mind of Silvester, who had been unable to sleep because his lady-love did not come to dinner, and who went into acute agony when her occult absence became known. While Walter Nugent was looking after the police and the newspapers, poor Silvester showed a fine capacity for doing nothing. He swore a little, and soliloquized much. His father, meeting him on the terrace, laughed at him.

"It is a mere logical dilemma, my boy," quoth the Squire. "If he girl likes you, she has run away to pique you; and if the girl does not like you, she has run away to avoid you. Whichever it may be, the right thing to do is to wait till she comes back again."

This did not console Silvester, who went away to get such solace as he could from his tried friend Walter Nugent.

* * * *

The Squire, a sanguine man, as this history has shown, dismissed his son and Louisa from his mind. The girl has taken some wild freak (he thought)—tired of the Reverend Arundel perhaps, a man of whom one might easily tire. The boy has not thoroughly made up his mind. Likely enough, she has run away to get rid of him. Pooh, pooh! let them fret and fight it out. This weak generation does not know how to go to work. Ah, by the way, that reminds me of Miss Silvia.

To his book-room went the Squire, and rang the bell, and ordered up his daughter.

She came.

“Sit down child,” he said; “I want to have a little talk with you.”

Silvia, the pluckiest little girl in England (the country of plucky girls), was rather frightened. A flush of distress flickered over her pretty face. She loved her father always, but she sometimes feared him; and it may be supposed that at this moment she had some slight reason for the latter feeling. He, not wishing to trouble his darling child, yet wishing to know what was in her heart, began thus:

“Silvia, my pet, what was the matter with you last night at dinner?”

“I don’t know, Papa. Was there anything the matter with me?”

“Child! why are you not as frank with me as your brother? Do you know *his* secrets?”

“No, indeed, Papa.”

“I like the promptitude of that negative. It has never occurred to you that he was rather fond of Louisa Saint Osyth; yet he is tearing his hair terribly because Louisa is not to be found to-day.”

Silvia said nothing.

“Now,” said the Squire, after several puffs of his pipe, “I want you, child, to prove yourself—I won’t say my daughter, but a daughter of the old house of Silchester. What’s our motto, child?”

“*God’s aid, no fear,*” said Silvia.

“Well, adhere to that. When your brother and Louisa found out they liked one another, your brother told me at once. My objection is solely the slight one that she is a trifle older than he. But why, my dear little Silvia, could you not tell me you had a fancy for Walter Nugent?”

“Because I don’t like him a bit, Papa,” said Silvia, in tears; “and he is so dreadfully persuasive, and I am afraid of him.”

She sank at her father's knees as she made this confession.

“AFRAID! My daughter afraid! But never mind, pet; I won’t scold you. You are very young, and have no experience of scoundrels. I am afraid it will be found out that Nugent is a scoundrel, and I am very sorry, for my dear friend his uncle’s sake. But, my dear little daughter, always tell me everything, as your brother Silvester does. He thinks he likes Louisa,—he tells me at once. Why am I left to find out by accident that this fellow Nugent likes you? ”

“I don’t know,” she said. “Even with you, Papa, I find it difficult to talk about such things.”

“You little humbug! of course it is difficult to mention to one’s father what is the most interesting topic of conversation with any hopeful youth you meet. If girls told their fathers everything, we should get on better. But now to the point. Do you like Nugent, Silvia? ”

“I *hate* him, Papa.”

“I won’t ask you why, just now, but I think you are right. And now, child, give me a promise. If any man asks you to marry him, tell me, and send him to me for answer.”

“I promise, Papa.”

That the promise was kept, be sure; for Silvia Silchester (with all her little faults) was a lady.

CHAPTER XVII.

TRAGEDY OR COMEDY?

“Tragedy meaneth blood, murder, and pillage ;
Comedy meaneth sweet play in a village.”

WALTER NUGENT, having shown himself early and active in Silchester, felt pretty sure that his desperate act was unsuspected.

Louisa Saint Osyth, with Mary Clymo at her bedside, had slept soundly enough the first night of her imprisonment. Next morning the sun rose radiant over the waste of waves, and she could see the green Devon coast in the distance. Breakfast was served in a room adjacent to her own, on quaint old china of hideous aspect; but to her annoyance Mary

Clymo was superseded by another attendant, a frightful stalwart woman of forty, who would not answer a single question in a straightforward manner; and who rather rudely made her understand that she could not go beyond the two rooms assigned to her.

Miss Saint Osyth was resolved to be calm, being sure that it was the best policy. She was consoled slightly by having noticed Nugent's yacht going shoreward, as she was dressing; and she rightly conjectured that he had gone to Silchester to show himself and escape suspicion. He would return by-and-by, of course; then, if he dared insult her, she would, though a parson's niece, and a writer of sermonettes, use her saloon-pistol. Thus determined, and finding herself locked into her rooms, she looked round for some occupation. Many books lay about: she discovered they were all French novels of the scrupulous sort. A glance at them was quite enough for Louisa, who was classic in her taste. The only volume

she could tolerate was a little copy of some of Béranger's songs ; and, weary of her suspense, she occupied herself by translating one or two of them into English verse. It kept her brain from mechanically perplexing itself with her position.

Be sure that many a time she went to the window to see whether Nugent's boat was coming in sight. Still she judged his policy accurately enough, and did not expect his return till evening. The day was lovely : the deep blue sea lay palpitating under the golden sun like a plain of sapphire. Devon ! how ineffably beautiful looked that sinuous coast to the pretty prisoner, who knew all the shore by Mount St. Nicholas, and could almost fancy she saw the great trees dipping their branches into the water—where you may row under an alley of woodland. It was very provoking to feel that all Silchester would be out to rescue her if her prison were known—to see the near shore, and yet be hopeless of help

from it. The little blue-stocking remembered her Horace—

“Tantalus a labris vitiens fugientia captat
Flumina”—

and thought herself much worse off than Tantalus.

About noon the elderly attendant brought her some luncheon, a lobster and a pint bottle of still hock. She asked for Mary Clymo, but got no reply. So she ate her refection as placidly as she could, thanking Walter Nugent for at least deigning to keep his captive alive.

She had ended her entertainment, and felt somewhat refreshed, and was deep in Béranger again, when suddenly strange noises were audible outside. Going to the window, she saw nothing save the quiet sea and Devon's green coast beyond. But she heard, and grew frightened as she heard, noise of scuffling and swearing and shrieking—which to her horror came nearer and nearer. What could it be?

She stood opposite the door, with her toy-pistol ready in her hand.

Suddenly the door flew open, smashed out of the panel by a mighty kick, and there entered no less a personage than Musical Willie's Highlander, the gigantic Donald. Several men and women were trying their best to drag him back, but they might as well have tried to move Ben Lomond. When he saw Miss Saint Osyth, he cried out, "Ah, I knew the poor lassie was here!" and with a sudden movement of his elbows backward drove the people who were hanging upon him clear out of his way. One fellow was thrown on his back, and lay stunned.

Louisa, knowing Donald, felt that she was safe. The Highlander, out of breath, took a great gulp of whisky from his flask, and then said,

"Now, lassie, if you're ready, I'll take you out of this den of thieves. Everybody in Silchester is mad about you, but we shall soon put them at their ease."

"But how did you know I was here?" asked Louisa.

"Oh, I'll tell you all as we row back. Don't stay for anything. I want to get you home quick."

Louisa obeyed:

"Women all obey
Who are true women."

She was only too glad to escape from her prison unharmed. The Highlander took her down to a point where a boat was moored. But, just before they reached it, they heard a fearful yell, and turning round beheld Nugent's panther bounding towards them. The man whom Donald had stunned, when he came to himself and saw his conqueror on the beach, let Cleopatra loose, enraging her by a cry which he had heard Nugent use for that purpose. Away she rushed like the wind in pursuit.

Donald seized a boat-hook that lay on the shore, and tried to get in front of Louisa.

“Stay!” she cried. “Look here!” She waited, with her saloon-pistol in her hand, till the panther was close on them, and then fired straight at the brute’s eye. The conical shot went right into its brain, killing it instantaneously. The Highlander was amazed; as indeed were the wretches who had let it loose.

“You *are* a brave lassie,” exclaimed Donald. “And to think that bairn’s toy would kill that big beast. It’s amazing.”

There was no more adventure. As they rowed homeward, Donald explained that Mary Clymo had managed to get off from the island without being perceived, and had come ashore at Mount St. Nicholas, where Donald was the first person she saw. He heard her story, and took boat at once, only staying to see she was in good quarters, and entreating her to say nothing to anybody till he came back.

“You see, Miss,” he said, “I want to punish that villain, though he is of my dear master’s kin.”

“But why did you not bring some one to help you?”

“Was there any need?” asked Donald, rather vain-gloriously, doubtless remembering Bannockburn and Robert the Bruce.

When they came ashore, Mary Clymo, who had been at a fisherman’s cottage, came to meet them. Louisa could scarcely find words to thank the brave Cornish girl, and was obliged to supplement them with tears. The strain on her energy and patience had been no trifle.

“Poor lassie!” exclaimed Donald, “I ought to have thought before to give her a drop of Glenlivet.”

Louisa, though Donald’s whisky was pretty strong, found herself much better after a drop.

Donald, who had a scheme of his own, took Louisa and Mary Clymo by a field path toward Silchester Rectory, avoiding the village. This path led to a wicket gate, usually locked to foil the tramps (for even in Devon there are tramps), whereof both Louisa and her uncle kept a key.

When they reached this point, Donald, who had made Miss Saint Osyth understand his object, retreated behind the tall yew hedge of the rectory lawn, while Louisa and her attendant entered.

On the lawn were the Rector and Walter Nugent trying to console the Rector. Their backs were toward the wicket gate. Louisa tripped softly over the turf, and when within a yard exclaimed,

“Uncle, I am quite safe.”

The Rector, not a strong man, was quite overcome by delight and surprise.

“Where *have* you been, my dearest Louisa?” he cried.

“The story is long, and rather amusing,” she said. “I will tell it presently, my dear uncle.”

Then, turning to Nugent, as if she had not before noticed his presence, she made him a coquettish curtsey, and said,

“Good morning, Mr. Nugent. This young

person has been in your service, I believe, and thinks of entering mine. Can you give her a character?"

Nugent, white to the lips with anger and amazement, spoke not. The puzzled Rector said,

"Mr. Nugent has been so very kind, Louisa."

"I don't doubt it, uncle," she said. "Your panther, Mr. Nugent, will be a splendid specimen when stuffed. Good morning."

She took the Rector's arm, and they went in together.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ISLAND AND VILLAGE.

“ When truth from falsehood carefully we winnow,
There is no difficulty in averring—
Within a village there’s a pond of minnow,
Around an island there’s a pond of herring :
This fact the pondering critic may pour acid on—
Still, they’re as like as Monmouth is to Macedon.”

A WAY to his island fled Walter Nugent, by the shortest and most furtive tracks reaching the place where his yacht was moored. Yet went he not unperceived. The Highlander, Donald, had kept quiet behind the yew hedge for reasons of his own. He was resolved not to let this man, whom he had always believed a rascal, go unpunished. It was contrary to his Highland notions of honour

to betray the worst of criminals to the police.
He was rather a believer in

“The good old rule, the simple plan,
That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can.”

Nugent’s wild habits had made him swift of movement and cunning to escape; but Donald was fleet as a roebuck, and had the keen eye of the Scottish moors. Knowing the point where the marauder’s boat would be moored, from long nocturnal practice with the bagpipes on the beach of Mount St. Nicholas, he took another line of country from the fugitive, keeping him in sight at short intervals. He could easily leap a five-barred gate or a quick-set hedge, and so reached the shore, without turning a hair, a minute or two before Nugent, who was not at all pleased to see him there, though he knew nothing as yet of his connection with Louisa’s escape.

The tiny yacht was at its wonted place.

Nugent was in a hurry, and wanted no words with Donald, whom he thought a fool. It is usual for knaves to think men fools because they are not knaves.

“Where are you going, Master Walter?” said Donald. “Maybe you’d take me for a sail.”

“I’m in a hurry just now,” said Nugent, disguising his ire.

“Scoundrels always are in a hurry,” quoth Donald, taking him by the collar with irresistible grasp.

Walter Nugent had a pistol out in a moment, but was not quick enough for the Highlander, who struck his arm up so sharply that the pistol went yards into the sea. Then, holding Nugent in his giant grip, he searched his pockets for other arms, and threw far into the water everything he found on his person. Lastly, taking him by the neck and waistband, he hurled Nugent himself with a mighty swing far into the tide, exclaiming,

“ Such a cur can’t drown. There’s a gallows on shore for him somewhere.”

He gave the boat a shove into the water, saw Nugent scramble painfully over its side, and walked contemptuously up toward the village.

The wretched Nugent, luckily for himself, could swim like a fish; but he was almost choked with salt water, and had lost his pistols, and also a packet of precious stones of vast value, which he always carried about with him in case of having to “vamoose,” as he would call it. However, he could not stay to search for them; he must get quickly to the island, pack up any valuables he had there, and get away at once. But for being intercepted by Donald, and losing his portable wealth, he would probably never have visited the island again.

It would have been just as well for him if he had not. The scoundrels he employed, when they saw something had happened, and that

the master was in difficulty, simply sacked the place and went away. They were wreckers and smugglers by vocation; they could employ that vocation anywhere. They vanished. Nugent found no relic of the past worth naming, except the dead body of poor Cleopatra lying stiff on the shore. In what mood he sailed away, baffled and penniless, may easily be guessed. Whither he went, and what he did thereafter, must come later in our narrative.

* * * *

But fancy the sensation in Silchester and Mount St. Nicholas! Fancy the gossip at the Oak, and the incoherent tales of old Harry Withers! Fancy the fanciful chatter and twitter among Madame Simonet's young ladies, most talkative of whom, little Amy Chatterton, wove a marvellous romance out of the frail materials that had passed the guarded walls of that sacred seminary! Fancy Burrows, the burly coachman and bird-fancier, flourishing his

four-in-hand whip at his cottage door, and swearing he'd like to flog the rascal! Fancy the barber's shop in the market-place!

No; that is beyond the most sympathetic reader's imagination. Nor can he be expected to imagine Musical Willie's chivalrous sorrow, or the Squire's noble anger, or Silvester's mad fancy for revenge. It was Louisa herself who told him all about her adventure, having implored her uncle to leave it in her own hands. The poor dear uncle wanted to go and tell everybody his own version of it.

Silvester was furious for a few minutes, but Louisa knew how to quiet him. There is a method, not altogether unconnected with contact of lips, which has been found of service. When his anger was cooled, came the question what should be done. A council was held in the library: the Squire, and his wife and daughter and son, and the parson and his niece, and Musical Willie and Donald being the prominent members thereof.

It was found that Donald took the chair and moved all the resolutions, by virtue of promptitude and vigour. Louisa was a good second.

“Master Walter will be gone,” said Donald, using this old name for him in deference to his master’s presence. “It’s best to let him go and repent. But it would be well to go over and see if any one’s left on the island.”

“And bring the dead panther to be stuffed,” said Louisa.

“By the way,” said the Squire, “that island is our property, Silvester. I let it years ago to a speculative Captain Tresidder, at a nominal rent, which I don’t think has been paid with perfect regularity. The old house upon it was very quaint: I have not seen it for years. I think I should like to pay it a visit, and then we can write to this Tresidder, and find out how it got into Mr. Nugent’s hands.”

“To-morrow will be soon enough to go, your honour,” said Donald. “Master Walter will be clean away, it’s certain; and the other people

may as well go as stay. They were a set of seaside thieves, all but Mary Clymo."

"We must find Mary Clymo a husband," said the Squire. "I think our friend Donald is right. To-morrow we'll cross to the island, and look at the old house, and bring the panther home to be stuffed, and make a picnic of it."

"Ah," said Louisa, "I must have that panther in my bedroom."

"To frighten your husband, I suppose," said Silvester.

"No: I think I can do that myself."

For which pert reply she was properly punished.

* * * *

Musical Willie had said scarce a word all this time. The affair to this loving and poetic creature was terribly tragic. That a nephew of his could do such deeds, was a shame on his ancient blood. He shuddered to think of what

might have happened. He felt a thrill of disgust through him as he thought of Walter Nugent. Himself gentle to the uttermost, a lover of all things that live, a chivalrous servant of ladies, their knightly defender, this sudden discovery of Walter Nugent's character prostrated him.

But the Squire consoled him.

“The fellow is mad, my dear friend. He has had a sunstroke somewhere—or slept on deck under a full moon. Had he been sane, he could not have calculated on keeping little Louisa a prisoner. He's away by this time; he'll clear his vexed brain by wandering over the sea; he'll come back some day in his right mind, and married to the queen of some undiscovered island. I know these young fools: they have a delirious moment, and are ashamed of it ever after.”

“I wish I could believe all that,” said Willie, mournfully.

“Believe it? By all means believe. Some-

where in my library—but I haven’t seen it for some years—there is a tall black-letter folio—*Johannes Erigena Anglicus de puerorum ac puerarum deliriis incomprehensibilibus*. It is charming to read, and most scientific. I’ll have it looked up, and send it you.”

It is to be feared this rare volume had been stolen, since it never reached Musical Willie.

“We’ll have our picnic to-morrow,” said the Squire, “and you shall ramble over the old house, and forget your trivial trouble, and sing us a song on the beach. All has gone well—and I shall give Donald a gold watch.”

“Ah,” said Willie, “from what that scamp said to me, I thought Miss Silvia liked him, and that you might perhaps consent.”

“I’d give Silvia to any man she loved,” said the Squire, “he being a gentleman in the true sense. But Silvia has assured me she hates Walter Nugent, only he had a strange persuasive way with him. She’s young enough

yet; she need not die a maiden lady, to quote your capital song."

So it was arranged there should be a picnic next day, and everybody interested should go, and that hampers should not be forgotten, and that the panther should be brought back to be stuffed for Louisa's bedchamber. By the way, it has been omitted to state that the islet is marked on the map Seamew Island.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PICNIC AT SEAMEW ISLAND.

“I do remember an apothecary.”

AS this rather original picnic party were starting from Silchester, Dr. Sterne suddenly appeared. He had been away at York for some time, in consequence of his father's death—his father having been a famous ornithologist, who could climb a tree for a bird's nest at seventy. When the Doctor reached his home late on the evening before, he got from his old housekeeper rapid though vague intelligence of all that had happened. He walked up to the Squire's as soon as he had refreshed himself, and found admission,

though it was just midnight. But in truth the eventful movement of affairs rendered sleep difficult, and the Squire kept quite dissipated hours, and the parson and his niece, having dined at Silchester, seemed loth to go away.

The party sat in a room known as the Walnut Room, by reason of its wainscoat of choice old Spanish walnut. The panels, carved by Grinling Gibbons, were painted with groups of dead game. The only separate picture was a portrait of the Squire's father in his later time, done by the greatest of all England's portrait-painters. The Doctor, suddenly shown in, saw the Squire and Parson on adjacent seats talking classically—and Silvia Silvester, a blue maiden, on a stool at her father's knee—and Silvester and Louisa on a sofa together, having a quiet little lovers' quarrel—and Mrs. Silchester in her great red easy chair, knitting something in soft wool with exquisite equanimity. If the Archangel Israfel were blowing

the last trump, Mrs. Silchester would be as calm as Sir Charles Coldstream, and would pick up a dropped stitch without turning her head to look at the trumpeter-seraph. The Doctor's eyes were first fastened on Silvia, who certainly was a pretty azure picture. But his arrival woke everybody up, and there was so much to explain to him that even the quarrel between Laura and Silvester came to a temporary end.

That quarrel arose from the Squire's crotchet. As they sat on the sofa, these two young fools (or young lovers, if you prefer it), both handsome, both clever, both full of youth's healthful vigour, they seemed a perfect pair. But Louisa was scolding Silvester (in a whisper) for not learning to read and write; and Silvester was laughing at Louisa (in a whisper, if laughter can be whispered) for thinking anything of those mere mechanic arts. All noble thoughts, he maintained, were uttered in noble speech. Louisa, on the other hand, went in

resolutely for the alphabet—as if it were as sacred as the Athanasian Creed.

The Doctor's entrance upset everything. There was so much to tell him, and it was all to be told at once. Some time elapsed before even so astute a logician as the Doctor could obtain from the fragmentary materials a coherent narrative and an intelligible motive. When he did, he was much amused. Always had he conceived Walter Nugent a cad, though he did not imagine him given to piracy. He coincided with Donald in thinking him a bad sort. He was much amused with the *denouement* [English, *end*, which has fewer letters by six, and by seven when the word is spelt *denouement* by the ignorant] of the story. He kudized Louisa, who blushed when he compared her to Penthesilea,—and all the while he was looking furtively at Silvia, who was very sleepy—being young you know—but who looked an amazingly lovely mass of sleep. Sitting on a stool at her father's knees, every now and

then she tumbled into a drowsy state, and the Doctor thought he should like to have to awake her.

* * * *

The picnic occurred next morn. *Dramatis personæ*, the Squire [Mrs. Silchester did not care to come], the Doctor, Musical Willie, Silvester, and (last but not least) Donald. The ladies were only Louisa and Silvia. When they reached the island, Cleopatra's dead body was the first thing visible, and Donald the giant swung it into the boat. Then they went up to the house, and no one was much surprised to find it wholly destitute and much dilapidated.

“There are a lot of legends about this unlucky old house,” said the Squire. “There are a lot of quaint corners, secret closets, sliding panels, moveable pictures. Suppose we investigate, before we lunch. Let us go in pairs. Willie and I will go together. I leave the others to do as they like. Only, when they

come back, they must all have something to tell."

With this speech he walked off with his friend Nairn, leaving the others to make their own arrangements. They obeyed the Squire, and paired. Strange to say, Silvester and Silvia did not go off together.

The Squire and Willie made way to a quaint old turret. It looked far over the sea. There the Squire had heard of a secret place of concealment, where something invaluable, or valuable, or valueless, might be hidden. He found the concealed corner, after much investigation, and brought out of a very dusty recess a manuscript of a dozen pages, in old handwriting, struck through the middle by a dagger of Spanish make.

"That's enough romance for one day," said Musical Willie. "We have beaten the others, I'll swear."



"It has always appeared to me," said the Doctor to Miss Silvia, "that odd things are found just where you don't expect them. Your papa has gone to the attics, apparently, and your brother seems to be going to the cellars; suppose we try the middle stratum. If nothing better happens, we shall not have risked apoplexy by going upstairs, or epilepsy by going down."

"I *do* like to hear a wise man talk nonsense," said Silvia. "And now, shall I venture a hint to a wise man? We shall not find anything if we stay here in the civilized part of the house, and look at the sea. So invent something you have found, and bring it the next time you come to Silchester. Papa will be delighted."

"So shall I," says the Doctor.

* * * *

Louisa had taken her lover into the cellars. Nothing loth was Silvester. He began to dis-

cover the remarkable capacity of his lady love, and to think himself lucky. He *was* lucky. He wanted development. This girl could develop him, if anybody could. He was just in the poetic and reckless stage, when a brilliant boy wants a mistress.

Louisa was capable of mastery.

Down in those same cellars they found for a long time very little indeed. But in a dingy corner, lighted only through a loophole, they suddenly discovered a pile of bottles. Louisa took one of them from the bin, and examined its label.

“Don’t you wish you could read?” she said to Silvester.

“Not to read wine-labels,” he replied.

“Ah, that’s all very fine; but wine-labels are of use. Take a bottle of this up for your father to look at. He will be cured of his heresy. You know, Silvester, I don’t mean to marry a man who can’t read.”

“How cruel!” he said. “As if a girl

married a man in order that he should read to her! Most girls would rather be kissed than read to."

Louisa's reply is unrecorded.

* * * *

When the three parties met on the beach, where Donald was arranging the dead panther for transit, each had a discovery.

"We have found a mysterious manuscript," says the Squire, Musical Willie being his partner in the discovery.

"So have we," said the Doctor, who had been gallantly escorting Miss Silvia. "But as it is too late to think of manuscripts now, let us compare them to-morrow."

"Ah," said Louisa, showing her bottle of Lachrimae Christi, which she had been carefully hiding, "you won't leave these till to-morrow, surely?"

The Doctor looked at the dusty flask.

"Manuscripts can wait; but wines can't,

Donald. We'll get all that stuff into the boat at once. There may be a lyric in one of those bottles."

The wine reached Silchester that day, and was tested. The manuscripts, by agreement, were postponed.

CHAPTER XX.

THE STORIES TOLD OVER LACHRIMAE CHRISTI.

“Ubi lacrimat Zeus, Nestoris ebibat annos.”

THEY were very dusty old bottles that had been found in the cellars of Seamew Grange. They were of a quaint old shape. The man who had bottled the wondrous wine would have been a centenarian at least if he had lived till that wine was drunken. As the Squire held it up in the light, the marvellous fluid, purple and amber mixed, seemed to scintillate with pleasure at escaping from its long imprisonment. The bright specks within it seemed to laugh. The idea occurred to the Squire, who filled a glass for Louisa, saying,

“Why should not a good old aristocratic wine be delighted to kiss the lips of a lady?”

“I wonder,” said the Doctor, “whence that wine came, and why nobody has yet drunken it. To me it seems miraculous. To find such a fluid in a semi-barbarous island is surely a thing without parallel in any record later than the *Odyssey* or the stories of Scheherazade. I hope the manuscripts we have to read will throw some light on it.”

Musical Willie had spent some hours in making such sense as he could of the manuscript which he and the Squire had discovered. It was dreadfully dusty and grimy, and the hole of the dagger-thrust had made many passages illegible; but Willie Nairn, a professed archæologist, skilfully restored it, and now he read it to his audience with as much delight as if he had been the original author, and with obvious belief in the wild story which it told.

The story had no title. It began abruptly,

and finished just as abruptly. It was in Norman French, so that Musical Willie's work of transcription and translation was no trifle.

“I am the Red Rose of Silchester. If the world should hear of me by-and-by, it will be as a lady who dared to love and dared to kill her lover. Do you wish to know why, you churl who a hundred years hence may find this writing? But why do I call you *churl*? You may be a lady, like myself; you may be a gentleman to whom churlishness is impossible.

“Well, I shall tell my story. The Red Rose of Silchester shall not be utterly misrepresented in the days to come. If what I now write comes to light, it will be fairly read, I hope. It is true, any way. The story is short enough. I was married by force. Sir Ermyn de Vaux, my father's greatest enemy, loved me, and took me away. I had no great objection. I had no special liking for Sir Ermyn de Vaux, but he swore he would have me, whatever happened,

and I like a man who is afraid of nothing. Ermyn was not afraid of the devil—perhaps because there was some relationship. Ermyn came into church on his horse one Sunday morning as the minister was reading the homily, rode up the chief aisle to our pew, seized me and swung me on to his horse, and galloped off to his house at Mount St. Nicholas. There was dreadful scandal in the church at such a deed, and my father was in great anger. But Ermyn had no fear; his retainers were many; he proved at last, both to my father and the churchmen, that they had better let him alone. Indeed we were ceremoniously married, and I lived lovingly with him, and in time he became good friends enough with my father.

“ However, one thing I found soon after we married: many love adventures had he previously tried, and he was quite ready for fresh ones. Often was he away, and when away I felt there was no knowledge of what he might do. By-and-by, he was away longer than

usual, and very sure I felt that there was sufficing reason for it.

“ But I did my best to content myself. Childless, I had few resources. I took to distilling the essences of herbs—rosemary, mint, thyme, aniseed, and a hundred others. To help me I got a stillroom-maid, Thyra Trelawny, out of Mevagissey. She was a pretty little dark-haired dark-eyelashed wench, who would be sure to wither fast. Deft of hand, she helped me well.

“ Her, Ermyn suddenly fancied. He was a man of sudden and unreasonable fancies ; she a girl of perfect willingness to do what any man asked her. How a gentleman can find pleasure in converse with creatures beneath him, I have never been able to understand. Beauty is a temptation ; but true beauty does not exist in connection with stupidity and sensuality. I have heard that scrofulous people are often pretty in their youth, and that scrofula comes from a word meaning a sow.

“But Ermyn fancied this wicked little Thyra, and I never noticed it. I am truthful. If my husband gives me the charge of his honour, from him I expect the same. I was disappointed. Once—how shall I tell the story?—I found him—with Thyra. Well! a dagger lay on the table. I struck it—where it ought to strike. I now strike it through this story of what I have done.

“It has been revealed to me in a dream that he who finds this writing will always be successful.”

“Which of us found it?” said the Squire to Willie.

“The woman who wrote it was stark mad,” said the Doctor. “It’s quite in the style of a modern romance.”

“Well,” said the Squire, “I can show you a picture up in one of the bedrooms, of a lady running a dagger into somebody. That may indicate the incident.”

“It was hardly worth while to kill such a

wretched fellow," said Louisa. "People of that kind should be publicly flogged."

"How amiable!" said Silvester. "I rather sympathize with Sir Ermyn. He ran away with the girl he liked. It was ungrateful of her to murder him because he happened to kiss the still-room maid."

Louisa said nothing, but looked as if she would like to put in a pestle and mortar all the pretty still-room maids in Europe.

"Now," said the Doctor, producing a manuscript much dustier than the other, "what say you to hearing the narrative of the White Rose of Silchester?"

I am afraid Silvia laughed. The fact is the Doctor had managed to get a hint of the contents of the other manuscript; perhaps little Silvia was his accomplice; and had manufactured a complementary one, with many lacunæ and all the venerable dust that could be found in the parish.



“I am the White Rose of Silchester. People say I am pretty, and the law of libel has not yet been invented. If it were, Papa says he should certainly prosecute them and get damages.

“However, Sir Hildebrand Odfysshe declared that he would marry me or die in the attempt. Sir Hildebrand was a poet, and a companion of the wicked Earl of Rochester. He told, I have since learnt, his troubles to the Earl. That dreadful rascal made a suggestion.

“You see (whoever the *you* may be that reads this), *I* had no particular objection to Sir Hildebrand, never having seen him. Papa had. Papa is a tremendous Protestant; Sir Hildebrand is an outrageous Catholic. Papa is six feet five; my Baronet is about five feet six. Papa is all hair; Sir Hildebrand couldn’t grow a beard, even if Rowland’s Macassar were invented, which as yet it is not.

“I happened to want a lady’s maid. I

intended advertising for one in *The Times*, but the first number of that highly respectable periodical had not appeared. I therefore let it be known in the vicinity, and received applications from several candidates. The one I chose, thinking she could do any quantity of work, turned out to be a man in disguise—it was Sir Hildebrand Odfysshe. He had shaved off what he called his beard and moustache—a simple suspicion of hair. He looked quite a nice little party in petticoats.

“I found my new lady’s maid very useful; but by-and-by she grew troublesome. There were disturbances in the servants’ rooms. The housekeeper could not keep order at night, when the servants were in bed. She said to me she thought it was all the new lady’s maid, who was such a dreadful romp and tease. I suggested that the new lady’s maid might sleep in my dressing-room, to be out of the way of the others.



“I am now Dame Matilda Odfysshe, and
—the White Rose of Silchester.”

* * * *

“I am quite of opinion,” said the Squire,
“that you have beaten us, Doctor. The
White Rose surpasses the Red Rose. Still,
on the other hand, it is otherwise. Sir Erwyn,
who rode into church to capture a wife, is of a
better sort than Sir Hildebrand, who for that
purpose wore petticoats.”

Even the ladies agreed.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PARLOUR BOARDER.

“ Though every day the fancies vary,
Nought enters that could shock a fairy,
Nought enters that's hirsute and hairy,
Or that can puzzle Mistress Mary,
Whose silver bells grow quite contrary ;
Nought enters that could sour a dairy.
Its ruler's wise, its guardians wary ;—
It is—a Ladies' Seminary.”

A MY CHATTERTON had a new sensation — something to talk of in the dormitory, when the candles were out, and a couple of dozen young ladies, having said their prayers, were supposed to be cosily asleep. *They weren't.* They talked in a suppressed tone, and confided to each other pro-

found secrets concerning the sweethearts they had seen in the holidays, or remarked at church. Amy, to tell truth, though most garrulous of all Madame Simonet's pupils, did not go in for sweethearts. Her special faculty was story-telling. She was a little Scheherazade. She would begin a tale at the end of the Midsummer holidays, and it would not be finished at Christmas.

At the same time, she liked gossip for a change. And now, there was a theme for gossip which interpolated pleasantly between the chapters of little Amy's endless romance and night. It is requisite here to remark that Madame Simonet was quite a young lady, almost as young as some of her pupils, but quite capable of keeping them in order. Had she not, her husband could. He was a French *émigré*, quite old enough to be her father. He taught French and drawing to all the best families round Silchester. By-and-by he married the maiden lady, Miss

Maddox, who kept the ladies' school at Silchester. His fame as a teacher increased the success of the school; in time he gave up most of his teaching, except at a few great houses. But Madame Simonet died rather suddenly; and when this sad even occurred, the old gentleman was rather puzzled what to do. He asked Dr. Sterne, who was the medical attendant at Silchester Seminary.

"I cannot keep a ladies' school, *mon ami*. It would be deemed improper in this remarkably religious island. Yet I do not want to throw away so good a property. What do you advise?"

He looked so grave about it that our friend the Doctor could hardly help laughing.

They were strolling along a path overshadowed by limes, which was one of the choicest corners of the seminary gardens. They had other choice spots. Monsieur Simonet was a great fruit grower, and beat

all the neighbourhood (ay, even Squire Silchester himself) in melons and peaches. Naturally he had no desire to leave the scene of his skill—his cherished glass frames, and southern walls, and asparagus beds. He was melancholy.

“It certainly *does* seem difficult for you to teach a lot of little girls,” said the Doctor. “Still, there are governesses, you know. They could keep the brats in order.”

“What is *brat*?” asked Monsieur Simonet.

“*Brat*, my dear friend,” replied the Doctor, “is old English for a pinafore or a petticoat, and so has come to mean the tiny inhabitant of such garments. How you are to manage a set of brats is of course a puzzle. Still, I think you may do it.”

“How?” exclaimed Simonet, smoking fiercely. “Am I to send a lot of babies to bed when they are naughty? It is very unlucky. I like the place, but I fear there is nothing to be done.”

“Why not marry Selina Woodman?” said the Doctor.

“Marry that child! Besides, I cannot marry for a year at least, according to your etiquette.”

“Public opinion will forgive you for six months. Go away for change, and leave the governesses to take charge of the school. With me to look after them, I shall be much surprised if at the end of the time little Selina does not show herself superior to all her colleagues.”

“Then she’ll want to govern me,” said Simonet, horror-stricken. “No, my dear Doctor; I had better give the affair up. Besides, she is so young.”

“That fault will mend. You are young for your years. Take my advice, the county will be delighted to think you are obliged to go away and grieve. Go. Grieve. Come back and marry Selina.”

“But if she won’t? I am sixty, and she is twenty-two.”

“Admirable proportion of ages,” said the Doctor. “Try it.”

* * * *

Simonet obeyed. He went to Paris for six months, and wept among his compatriots. There was no perceptible increase of the waters of Seine. There was, however, in the consumption of absinthe. Simonet returned from the city of lust and laughter quite ready to follow the Doctor’s advice. He asked Selina Woodman to marry him; she accepted, perchance out of gratitude, and Madame Simonet’s school became more famous than ever.

Now the second Madame Simonet was only a “young person” whom the first Madame Simonet had taken in. She was an orphan: her father had been killed at Matravers’s factory by an accident. She was about eight. Madame thought she might be brought up to attend to the young ladies’ linen; but she

showed unusual cleverness, and became in time an inmate of the school. Thence she passed to the position of governess.

* * * *

Return we to Amy Chatterton's sensation. A new parlour boarder had arrived at the Silchester Seminary—a Miss Laura Bronté. She was one of those ugly girls that fools think pretty. Madame Simonet objected to the parlour boarder system; but the uncle of this young lady, a venerable white-haired gentleman who came from India, conquered her prejudices by eloquently assuring her that his niece was not in health, and that he would pay any price she liked.

So Miss Laura brought her long dark eyebrows and eyelashes, and her sly half-communicative eyes, and her rather tawdry jewelry and finery, to Silchester Seminary. The bargain had been made in old Simonet's absence, and he was decidedly disgusted. He did not

like the young person's look. However, he usually let his wife have her way, so long as she did not interfere with his horticultural arrangements. So he merely indulged in a few slight French objurgations, and then went away to see if there was any sign of red spider among his melons.

Laura Bronté was only to learn accomplishments, and those only when she chose. She was to be quite free from restriction. She was to go in and out as she liked. She was to pay two hundred a year. That sum, double the usual amount, tempted Madame Simonet, and settled the question.

Hence there was gossip in the dormitories, and much criticism of the new arrival. O for the easy pencil of young Maclise to sketch some twenty or thirty little girls, in airy costume, in various attitudes upon their bedsteads, while Amy the oratress chattered! Chattered! Why the cataract of Lodore was nothing to it! How she analysed that unlucky parlour

boarder ! How she criticised the eyes and the eyebrows, the shape and the manner !

“ She eats tea-leaves and slate pencil, I’m sure,” said Amy. “ She couldn’t get such a lovely complexion without it. It’s just a mixture of the brown of bohea with the green-blue of slate. I think it charming, but I am of course open to contradiction.”

“ What a nuisance you are, Amy,” exclaimed Grace Greenland, the Dudu of the dormitory. “ You chatter like a magpie, and nobody can sleep. I declare I’ll sew you up in a bolster-case and hang you out of window, if you are not quiet.”

As Grace was as strong as Penthesilea, queen of the Amazons, Amy Chatterton subsided. There was silence and there was sleep.



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